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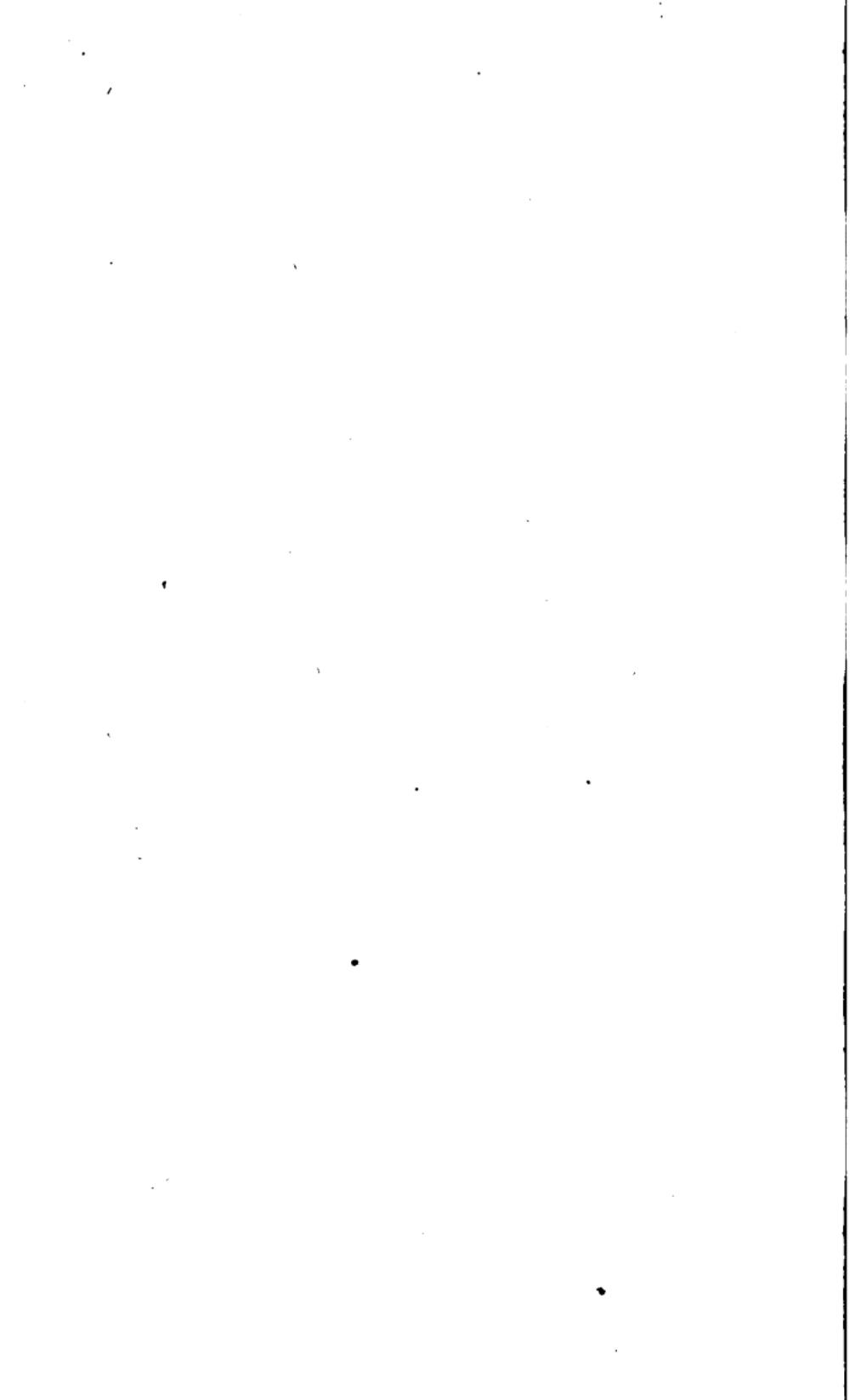
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1918





# THE FIGHT

AT

## DAME EUROPA'S SCHOOL:

SHOWING HOW

THE GERMAN BOY THRASHED  
THE FRENCH BOY;

AND HOW THE

ENGLISH BOY LOOKED ON.

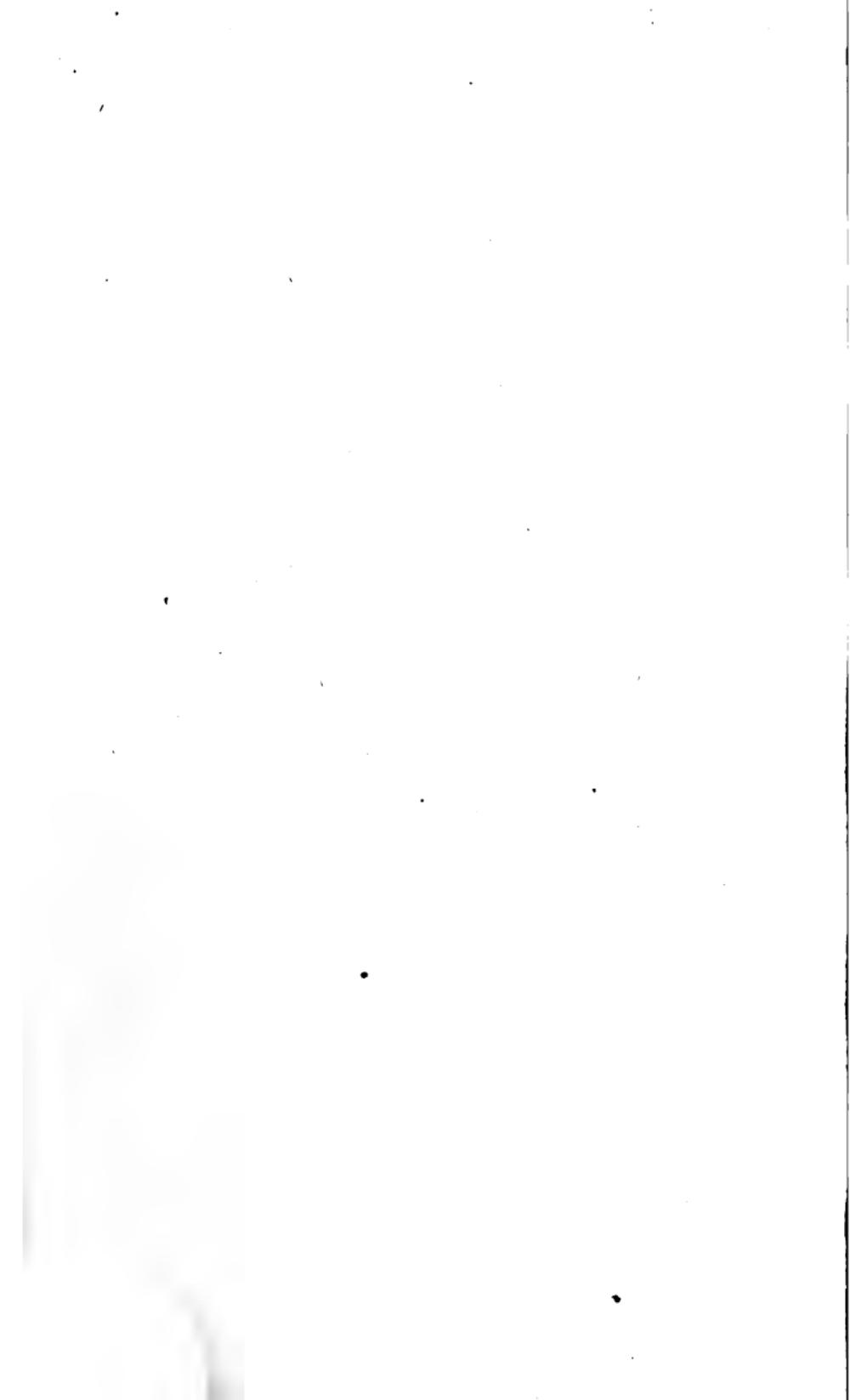
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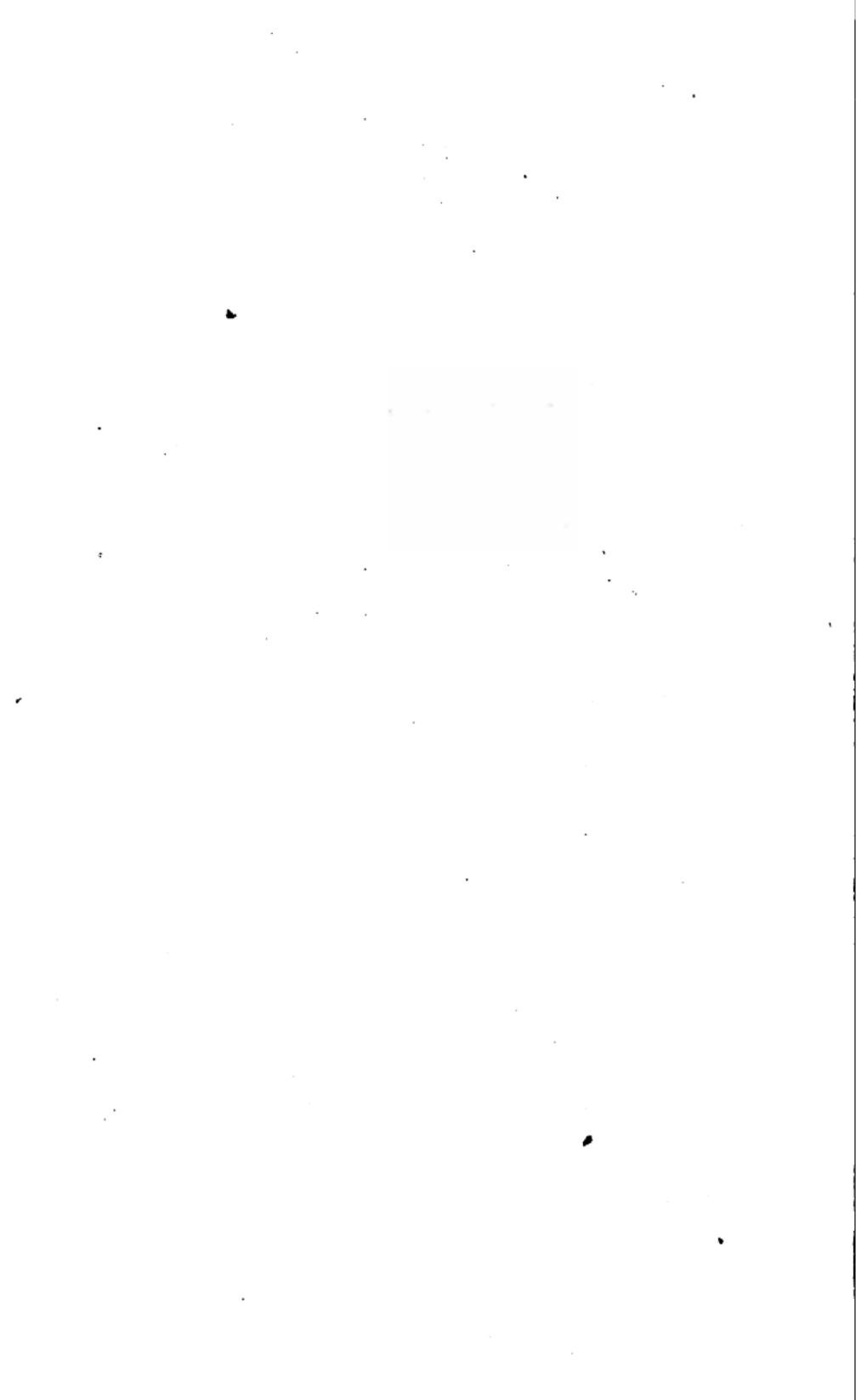
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## The Fight at Dame Europa's School.

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MRS. EUROPA kept a Dame's School, where Boys were well instructed in modern languages, fortification, and the use of the globes. Her connection and credit were good, for there was no other school where so sound and liberal an education could be obtained. Many of her old pupils held Masterships in other important establishments, two of which may be mentioned as consisting chiefly of dark swarthy youths, decidedly stupid and backward for their years; while a third was a large modern Academy full of rather cocky fellows, who talked big about the institutions of their school, and talked, for the most part, through their nose.

The lads at Mrs. Europa's were of all sorts and sizes—good Boys and bad Boys, sharp Boys and slow Boys, industrious Boys and idle Boys, peaceable Boys and pugnacious Boys, well-behaved Boys and vulgar Boys; and of course the good old dame could not possibly manage them all. So, as she did not like the

masters to be prying about the play-ground out of school, she chose from among the biggest and most trustworthy of her pupils five monitors, who had authority over the rest of the Boys, and kept the unruly ones in order. These five, at the time of which we are writing, were Louis, William, Aleck, Joseph, and John.

If a dispute arose among any of the smaller Boys, the monitors had to examine into its cause, and if possible to settle it amicably. Should it be necessary to fight the matter out, they were to see fair play, stop the encounter when it had gone far enough, and at all times to uphold justice, and prevent tyranny and bullying.

The power thus placed in their hands was for the most part exercised with discretion, and to the manifest advantage of the school. Trumpery little quarrels were patched up, which might otherwise have led to the patching up of bruises and black eyes; and many a time when two little urchins had retired with their backers into a corner of the play-ground to fight about nothing at all, did the dreaded appearance of Master Louis or Master John put them to flight, or force them to shake hands. The worst of it was that some of the

monitors themselves occasionally took to bullying, and then of course it became more than ever the duty of the rest to interfere. There lingered a tradition in the school of a terrific row in times past, when a monitor named Nicholas made a most unprovoked attack upon a quiet but very dirty little Boy called Constantine. John and Louis stuck up for the child boldly, and gave Nicholas such a thrashing that he never got over it, and soon afterwards left the school.

Each of the upper Boys at Dame Europa's had a little garden of his own, in a corner of the play-ground. The Boys took great interest in their gardens, and kept them very neatly. In some were grown flowers and fruits, in others mustard and cress or radishes, which the young cultivators would sell to one another, and take into Hall, to help down their bread and scrape at tea-time. Every garden had in the middle of it an arbor, fitted up according to the taste and means of its owner. Louis had the prettiest arbor of all, like a grotto in fairy land, full of the most beautiful flowers and ferns, with a vine creeping over the roof, and a little fountain playing inside. John's garden was pretty enough, and more productive than any ; owing its chief beauty, however, to the fact

that it was an Island, separated from all the rest by a stream, between twenty and thirty feet wide. But his arbor was a mere tool-house, where he shut himself up almost all play-time turning at his lathe, or making nets or sharpening knives, or cutting out boats to sail on the river. Still, John was fond of a holiday now and then ; and when he was tired of slaving away in his own garden, he would punt himself across the brook, and pay a visit to his neighbor Louis, who was always cheerful and hospitable, and glad to see him. Many and many a happy hour did he spend in his friend's arbor, lying at full length on the soft moss, and eating grapes and drinking lemonade, and thinking how much pleasanter it was over there than in his own close fusty shop, with its dirt and litter, and its eternal smell of tar, and nets, and shavings. Anyhow, thought Johnnie, I make more profit out of my garden than any of the other fellows, so I must put up with a few bad smells. For Dame Europa, by way of encouraging habits of industry, allowed the Boys to engage pretty extensively in commercial pursuits, and it was said that Master John, who had been working unusually hard of late, had sometimes trebled or quad-

rupled his half-yearly pocket-money out of the produce of his tool-house and garden.

By the side of Louis' domain was that of William, the biggest and strongest of all the monitors. He set up, however, for being a very studious and peaceable Boy, and made the rest of the school believe that he had never provoked a quarrel in his life. He was rather fond of singing psalms and carrying Testaments about in his pocket ; and many of the Boys thought Master William a bit of a humbug. He was proud as anybody of his garden, but he never went to work in it without casting envious eyes on two little flower-beds which now belonged to Louis, but which ought by rights, he thought, to belong to him. Indeed it was notorious that in old days, before either Louis or William came to the school, one of Louis' predecessors in the garden had pulled up some stakes which served for a boundary, and cribbed a piece of his neighbor's ground. For a long while William had set his heart upon getting it back again ; but he kept his wishes to himself, and nobody suspected that so good and religious a Boy could be guilty of coveting what was admitted by the whole school to be now the property of another. Only one Boy, his favor-

ite fag, did William take into his confidence in the matter. This was a sharp, shrewd lad named Mark, not over scrupulous in what he did, full of deep tricks and dodges, and so cunning that the old dame herself, though she had the eyes of a hawk, never could catch him out in anything absolutely wrong. To this smart youth William one day whispered his desires, as they sat together in the summer-house smoking and drinking beer ; for I am sorry to say that they both smoked and drank almost all their play-time, though of course it was against the rules of the school.

“There is only one way to do it,” said Mark. “If you want the flower-beds you must fight Louis for them, and I believe you will lick him all to smash ; but you must fight him alone.”

“How do you mean ?” replied William.

“I mean, you must take care that the other monitors don’t interfere in the quarrel. If they do they will be sure to go against you. Remember what a grudge Joseph owes you for the licking you gave him not long ago ; and Aleck, though to be sure Louis took little Constantine’s part against him in that great bullying row, is evidently beginning to grow jealous of your influence in the school. You

see, old fellow, you have grown so much lately, and filled out so wonderfully, that you are getting really quite formidable. Why, I recollect the time when you were quite a little chap!"

"Yes," said William, turning up his eyes devoutly, "it has pleased Providence that I should be stout."

"I dare say, but it has not pleased the other monitors. And they were very angry, you know, when you took those little gardens belonging to some of the small Boys, and tacked them on to yours."

"But, my dear Mark, I did that by your own particular advice."

"Of course you did, and quite right, too. The little beggars were not strong enough to work, and it was far better that you should look after their gardens for them, and give them a share of the produce. All the same, no doubt it made the other monitors jealous, and I am not sure that the Old Dame herself thought it quite fair."

"Did you ever find out, Mark, what *he* thought of it?" asked William, winking his left eye, and jerking his thumb over his left shoulder toward the island.

"Oh," answered Mark, with a scornful

laugh, "never you mind *him*. He won't meddle with anybody. He is a deal too busy in that filthy, dirty shop of his, making things to sell to the other Boys. Bah! it makes me sick to think how that place smells!" and the fastidious youth took a long draught of beer, by way of recalling some more agreeable sensations.

"He is an uncommonly plucky fellow," said William, when they had smoked for a while in silence, "and as strong as a lion."

"As plucky and as strong as you please, my friend, but as lazy as ——," and here again Mark, being altogether at a loss for a simile, sought one at the bottom of the pewter. "Besides," he continued, when he had slaked his thirst, "he is never *ready*. Look what a precious mess he made of that affair with Nicholas. It was before you came, you know, but I recollect it well. Why, poor Johnnie had no shoes to fight in, and they had it out in the stoniest part of the play-ground, too, where his feet were cut to pieces. And then again he took it all so precious cool that he got late for breakfast in the morning, and had to fight on an empty stomach. Pluck and strength are all very well, but a fellow *must* eat and

drink, and have a pair of decent shoes to stand up in."

"And why couldn't he get a pair of decent shoes?" asked William. "He has got heaps of money."

"Heaps upon heaps, but he wanted it for somthing else—to buy a new lathe, I think it was; and so he sat grinding away in his dirty shop, and thinking of nothing but saving up his sixpences and shillings."

"Then, my dear Mark, what do you advise me to do?"

"Ah, that is not easy to say. Give me time to think, and when I have an idea, I will let you know. Only, whatever you do, take care to put Master Louis in the wrong. Don't pick a quarrel with *him*, but force him, by quietly provoking him, to pick a quarrel with *you*. Give out that you are still peaceably disposed, and carry your Testament about as usual. That will put old Dame Europa off her guard, and she will believe in you as much as ever. The rest you may leave to me; but in the meantime, keep yourself in good condition; and, if you can hear of any one in the town who gives lessons in bruising, just go to him and get put up to a few dodges. I know for a fact that Louis has been training hard, and

exercising his fists ever since you gave that tremendous thrashing to Joseph."

The bell now rang for afternoon school, and the two friends hastily smothered their cigars, and finished between them what was left of the beer. Mark ran off to the pump to wash his hands, which no amount of scrubbing would ever make decently clean, while William changed his coat and walked sedately across the playground, humming to himself, not in very good tune, a verse of the Old Hundredth Psalm.

An opportunity of putting their little plot into execution soon occurred. A garden became vacant, on the other side of Louis' little territory, which none of the Boys seemed much inclined to accept. It was a troublesome piece of ground, exposed to constant attacks from the town cads, who used to overrun it in the night and pull up the newly planted flowers. The cats, too, were fond of prowling about in it, and making havoc among the beds. Nobody bid for it, therefore, and it seemed to be going begging.

"Don't you think," said Mark one day to his friend and patron, "that your little cousin, the new Boy, might as well have that garden?"

"I don't see why he should not, if he wants

it," replied William, by no means deep enough to understand what his faithful fag was driving at.

"It will be so nice for Louis, don't you see, to have William to keep him in check on one side, and William's little cousin to watch him on the other side," observed Mark, innocently.

"Ah, to be sure," exclaimed William, beginning to wake up, "so it will; very nice indeed. Mark, you are a sly dog."

"I should say, if you paid Louis the compliment to propose it, that it is such a delicate little attention as he would never forget—even if you withdrew the proposal afterwards."

"Just so, my Boy, and then we shall have to fight. But look here, won't the other chaps say that I provoked the quarrel?"

"Not if we manage properly," was the reply.

"They are sure to fix the cause of dispute on Louis, rather than on you. You are such a peaceable boy, you know; and he has always been fond of a shindy."

So Dame Europa was asked to assign the vacant garden to William's little cousin. "Well," said she, "if Louis does not object, who will be his nearest neighbor, he may have it."

"But I *do* object, ma'am," cried Louis. "I

very particularly object. I don't want to be hemmed in on all sides by William and his cousins. They will be walking through my garden to pay each other visits, and perhaps throwing balls to one another right across my lawn."

"Oh, but you might be sure that I should do nothing unfair," said William, reproachfully. "I have never attacked anybody," he continued, fumbling in his pocket for the Testament, and bringing out by mistake a baccy pouch and a flask of brandy instead, which, however, he was fortunately quick enough to conceal before the Dame had caught sight of them.

"That's all my eye," said Louis. "I don't believe in your piety. Come, take your dear little relation off, and give him one of the snug corners that you bagged the other day from poor Christian."

"Oh, Louis," began William, looking as meek as possible, "you know I never bagged anything. I am a domestic, peace-loving Boy —"

"Very much so, indeed," cried Louis, with a sneer. "It's lessons in *peacemaking*, I suppose, that you have been taking from the 'Brummagem Bruiser' for the last six months or more

the fellow that bragged to a friend of mine that, though you used to be the clumsiest fellow he ever set eyes on, he had made you *as sharp as a needle with your fists!*"

"A friend of yours, you said, did you, my dear? Perhaps that was the 'Sheffield Slasher,' who told my fag Mark that he had made your arms strong enough to throw a ball or a stone more than a hundred yards."

"Come, come," interposed the Dame. "I can't listen to such angry words. You five monitors must settle the matter quietly among yourselves; but no fighting, mind. The day for that sort of thing is quite gone by." And the old lady toddled off, and left the boys alone.

"I wouldn't press it, Bill, if I were you," said John, in his deep gruff voice, looking out of his shop window on the other side of the water. "I think it's rather hard lines for Louis, I do indeed."

"Always ready to oblige you, my dear John," said William; and so the new Boy's claim to the garden was withdrawn.

"What shall I do now, Mark?" asked William, turning to his friend. "It seems to me that there is an end of it all."

"Not a bit," was the reply. "Louis is

still as savage as a bear. He'll break out directly, you see if he don't."

"I have been grossly insulted," began Louis at last, in a towering passion, "and I shall not be satisfied unless William promises me never to make any such underhand attempts to get the better of me again."

"Tell him to be hanged," whispered Mark.

"You be — no," said William, recollecting himself, "I never use bad language. My friend," he continued, "I cannot promise you anything of the kind."

"Then I shall lick you till you do, you psalm-singing humbug!" shouted Louis.

"Come on!" said William, lifting up his hand as if to commend his cause to Heaven, and looking sanctimoniously out of the whites of his eyes. And it was well for him that Louis did not take him at his word; for, while one hand was lifted up, the other was encumbered with a bundle of good books which he was carrying to his summer-house, and it would not have required much to knock him down. But Louis did not feel quite well. He had taken a blue pill that morning, and he put off the attack therefore till he should meet his adversary again.

Meanwhile, by Mark's advice, William ran

off to the Brummagem Bruiser, who put him up to all the latest dodges, and exercised him in the noble art to such good purpose that on his first encounter with Louis after breakfast the next morning he hit out a crushing blow from his shoulder and knocked his enemy down. Louis was soon on his legs again, and he, too, did good execution with his fists ; but he was clearly overmatched, and at the end of the first round he had been punished pretty severely.

“ Hot work, isn’t it, my Boy ? ” said William, chaffing him as he mopped the perspiration from his steaming forehead. “ This is what you call your *Baptism of fire*, I suppose, aye ? ” Then he wrote home to his mother, on the back of a half-penny post card, so that all the letter carriers might see how pious he was : —“ Dear Mamma, I am fighting for my *Fatherland*, as you know I call my garden. It is a fine name, and creates sympathy. Glorious news ! Aided by Providence, I have hit Louis in the eye. Thou may’st imagine his feelings. What wonderful events has Heaven thus brought about ! Your affectionate Son, William.” Then he sang a hymn and went on with the second round.

Meanwhile, the other monitors looked quietly on, not knowing exactly what to do.

"Oughtn't I to interfere?" asked John, addressing one of his favorite fags.

"No," said Billy, who was head fag, and twisted Johnnie round his finger. "You just sit where you are. You will only make a mess of it, and offend both of them. Give out that you are a 'neutral.' "

"Neutral!" growled John, "I hate neutrals. It seems to me a cold-blooded cowardly thing to sit by and see two big fellows smash each other all to pieces about nothing at all. They are both in the wrong, and they ought not to fight. Let me go in at them."

"No, no," said Bobby, a clever fair-haired Boy, who kept John's accounts, and took care of his money. "You really can't afford it; and besides, you've got no clothes to go in. There is not a fellow in the school who wouldn't laugh at you, if you stood up in his garden. Sit still and grind away, old chap, and make some more money, and be thankful that you live on an island, and can take things easily."

"Well," said John, sulkily, "I don't half like it, though certainly my clothes are no very respectable, and there is no time now to

mend them. But look here, Bob ; I mean to go across and help to sponge the poor beggars, if they get mauled."

" You may do that, and welcome," replied Bobby. " You will make no enemies that way, and it may cost you perhaps eighteen pence in ointment and plaster. But bless you, Johnnie, if you were to rig yourself out well enough to hold your own against Louis or William, you would have to fork out a ten-pound note or more."

John went on with his work in rather a grumpy humor, for he had always been looked up to as the leading Boy of the school, and he did not like to play second fiddle. He felt sure that if he had been half so natty and well got up as he used to be, he might have stoppod the fight in a moment. For the next half hour he cursed Billy and Bobby and all the other little sneaks who had wormed themselves into favor with him, by teaching him to save money. " Hang the money !" growled Johnnie to himself ; " I'd give up half my shop to get my old *prestige* back again." But it was too late now. Nevertheless, he had his own way about the sponging, and certianly he did behave well there. At the end of every round that was fought, he got across the

stream, and bathed poor Louis' head, for he wanted help the most, and gave him sherry and water out of his own flask. "I'm so very sorry for you, my dear Louis," said he, as the Boy, more dead than alive, struggled up to his feet again.

"Thank you kindly, John," said Louis; "but," he added, looking somewhat reproachfully at his friend, "why don't you separate us? Don't you see that this great brute is too many for me? I had no idea that he could fight like that."

"What can I do?" said John. "You began it, you know, and you really must fight it out. I have no power."

"So it seems," replied Louis. "Ah, ther<sup>e</sup> was a time—well, thank you kindly, John, for—the sticking plaster."

"Come on!" shouted William, thirsting for more blood.

"*Vive la guerre!*" cried poor Louis, rushing blindly at his foe. Well and nobly he fought, but he could not stand his ground. When he did hit, indeed, he hit to some purpose; but seldom could he reach out far enough to do much damage. Foot by foot and yard by yard he gave way, till at last he was forced to take refuge in his arbor, from the window of which

he threw stones at his enemy to keep him back from following.

Louis was plainly in the wrong. He ought to have calculated the other Boy's strength before attacking him, and he deserved a licking for his rashness. But he had had his licking now; and when William, who talked so big about his peaceable disposition, and declared that he only wanted to defend his "fatherland," chased him right across the garden, trampling over beds and borders on his way, and then swore that he would break down his beautiful summer-house, and bring Louis on his knees, everybody felt that the other monitors ought to interfere. But not a foot would they stir. Aleck looked on from a safe distance, wondering which of the combatants would be tired first. Joseph stood shaking in his shoes, not daring to say a word, for fear William should turn round upon him, and punch his head again; and John sat in his shop, grinding away like a nigger at a new rudder and a pair of oars which he was cutting out for Louis' boat, in case he wanted to take advantage of the brook—for which service Louis would pay him handsomely, and William abuse him cordially.

"I can't help it," said John, apologetically,

"I'll make a rudder and some oars for *you* too, and a boat besides, if you want one--that is, of course, if you will pay me well."

"But I *don't* want one," answered William angrily. "I have got no water to float it in, as you very well know." By which it will appear that John did not make many friends by his neutrality. "And just look here," continued William, "do you know where these cuts on my forehead came from? Why, from stones which you pitched across the water for Louis to throw at me."

"Can't help it, Bill; it is the law of neutrality."

"Neutrality, indeed! I call it Brutality." And so William went across the garden again, leaving Johnnie at his work—of which, however, he began to feel thoroughly ashamed.

"Come and help a fellow, John," cried Louis in despair from his arbor. "I don't ask you to remember the days we have spent in here together, when you have been sick of your own shop. But you might do something for me, now that I am in such a desperate fix, and don't know which way to turn."

"I am very sorry, Louis," said John, "but what can I do? It is no pleasure to me to see you thrashed. On the contrary, it would pay me

much better to have a near neighbor well off and cheerful than crushed and miserable. Why don't you give in, Louis? It is of no mortal use to go on. He will make friends directly if you will give back the two little strips of garden; and if you don't he will only smash your arbor to pieces, or keep you shut up there all dinner time, and starve you out. Give in, old fellow. There's no disgrace in it. Everybody says how pluckily you have fought."

"Give in!" sneered Louis, "that is all the comfort you have for a fellow, is it? Give in! why, would *you* give in, if that great brute was in front of your shop, swearing that he would break it down? No disgrace, indeed! No, I don't think there is any disgrace in anything that *I* have done; but though my dear, dear arbor that *I* have spent so many weeks in building should be pulled down about my ears, and every flower in my garden rooted up, I would not change places with you, John, sitting there sleek and safe—no, not for all the gold that ever was coined! Give in, indeed! *Mon Dieu!* that I should ever have heard such a word as that come across our little stream!"

So Johnnie began to discover that, if lookers-on see the most of the game, they do not always get the most enjoyment out of it. But

the bell now rang for dinner, and he followed the rest of the Boys with some anxiety, not being quite easy in his mind as to the account he would have to give to Mrs. Europa of what had been going on.

"Louis and William are very late to-day," observed the Dame, when dinner was half over. "Does any one knew where they are?" And then bit by bit she learned from some of the boys sitting near her the whole story.

"And pray, John, why did you not separate them?" demanded the Dame.

"Please, ma'am," answered Johnnie, "I was a *neutral*."

"A what, sir?" said she.

"A neutral, ma'am."

"Just precisely what you had no business to be," she returned. "You were placed in authority in order that you might *act*, not that you might stand aloof from acting. Any baby can do that. I might as well have made little Georgie here a monitor, if I had meant him to have nothing to do. Neutral, indeed! *Neutral* is just a fine name for *Coward*. Besides, there is no such thing. You *must* take one side or the other, do what you will. Now, which side did you take, I wonder?

A titter ran round the room, and the little

Boys began to whisper to one another something which appeared to be in their small estimation an excellent joke. It was good fun to them to see a monitor badgered, even if they should get paid out for it afterwards.

"What are you saying?" said the Dame. "Both sides, eh? Well, and how did you manage that, Master John?"

There was some more tittering and whispering and shuffling about on the forms, and then a chorus of voices said, "Please, 'em, he sucked up to both of them."

"Just what ' neutrals ' always do," said Mrs. Europa; "sucked up to both, I suppose, and pleased neither. Ah, no doubt," she continued, gradually gathering information, "offended Louis by always preaching at him that he was in the wrong, and offended William by supplying Louis with stones. Now, I tell you what it is, John. I have long watched your career with pain, and have seen how you are content to sacrifice everything—duty, and influence, and honor — for the sake of putting by a few paltry shillings. You have been badly advised. You have chosen to have about you a set of fags who are no credit to anybody, simply because they make better bargains for you in the things you sell to the other Boys; and

now you see the consequence. If such fellows as Ben and Hugh had been your fags, you know very well that this disgraceful scene would never have taken place at all. You would have been sufficiently well trained and well equipped to command the respect of the other monitors, and the two rivals would not have dared to come to blows. There *was* a time when, if you so much as held up your finger, the whole school would tremble. Nobody trembles now. Nobody cares one farthing what you think or say. And why? because you have grown a sloven and a screw, and Boys despise both the one and the other. You ought to have prevented the fight from the very first. Failing this, you ought, in conjunction with the other monitors, to have stepped in the moment the Boys had proved their relative strength, and struck a fair balance between them. Instead of doing so, you sit coolly in your shop, supplying the means of carrying on the fight, and coining a few wretched coppers out of your schoolfellows' blows and wounds. You have been a bad friend to both of them. Well, some day, perhaps, you may want friends yourself. When you do, I hope you may find them. Take care that William, the *peaceable, unaggressive* Boy, does not con-

trive (as I fully believe he will contrive) to get a footing on the river, where he can keep a boat, and then one fine morning take your pretty island by surprise."

"It was Louis' own fault, ma'am," urged John. "He began it all. William was only defending his Fatherland."

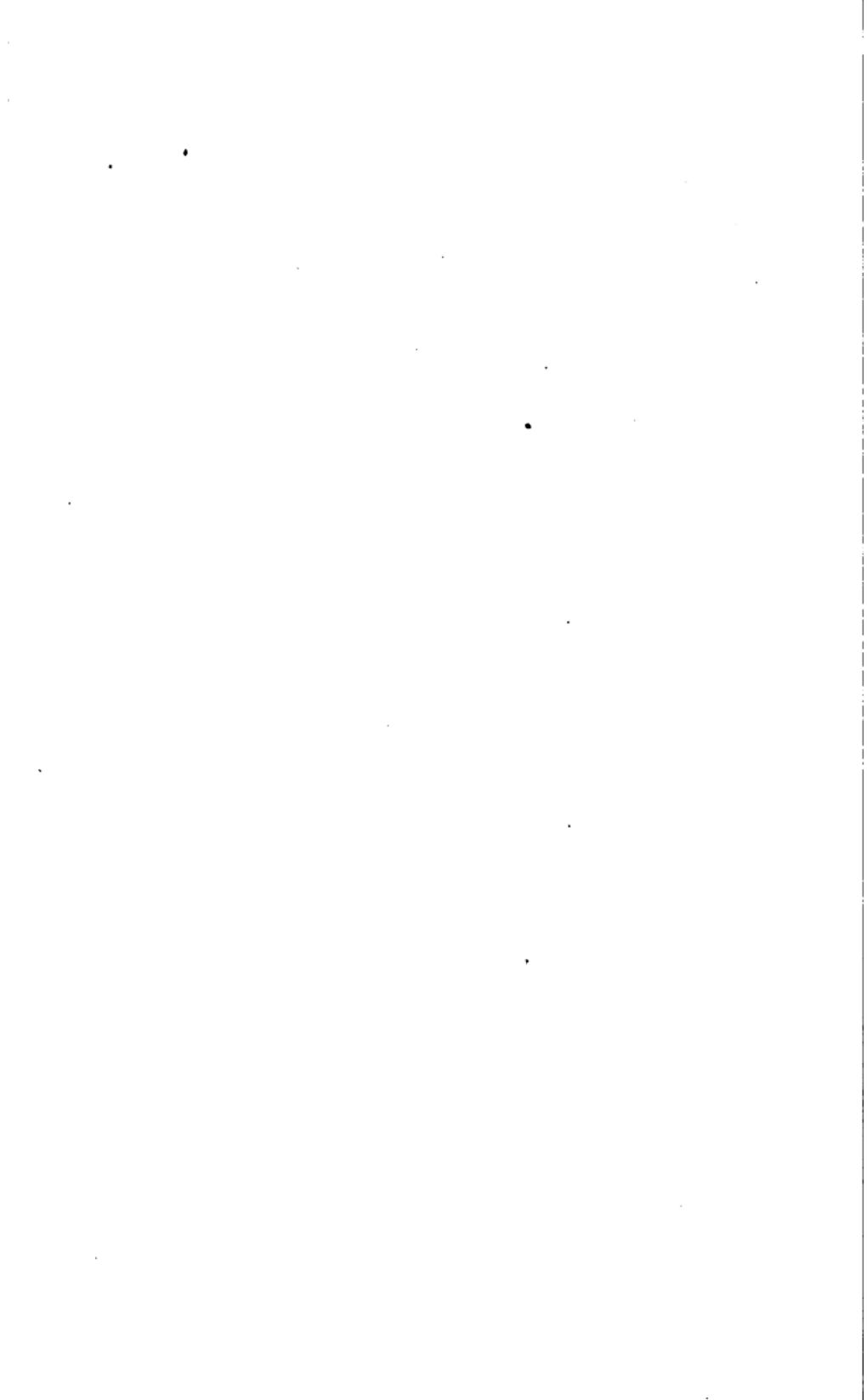
"Defending his Grandmotherland!" retorted the Dame contemptuously. "It looks very like self-defence to chase a Boy half across the play-ground and threaten to kick down his arbor. Very like self-defence, to train hard for six months, and then propose something which is certain to create a row. And although Louis has been in the wrong, he has also been severely punished, and it is time that he should be relieved. What! Are those who make mistakes never to be helped out of them? Is it any the less incumbent on the strong to protect the weak, because the weak has got himself into a mess by his own fault? However, there is some excuse for William, who is half mad with the fever of success; but there is no excuse for you, who have sat still in cold blood and looked on. You have abused the trust committed to you as one of the five monitors of this school, and your office shall be taken from you——"

"Please 'em," said a chorus of little Boys

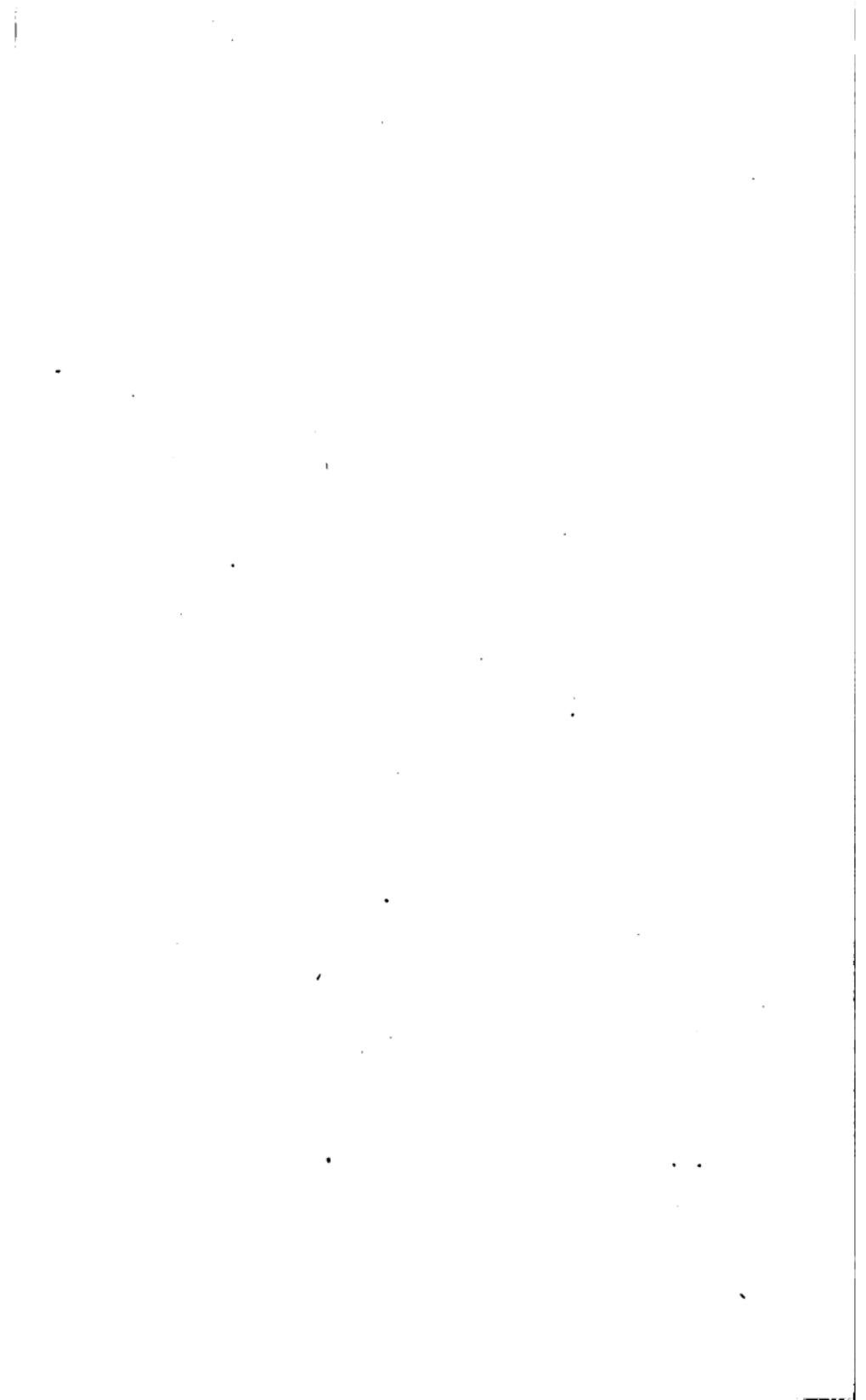
together, “please ‘em, *do* let him off this time. He was *so* kind to Louis and William when they were bad. He brought them water, and bathed their faces, and stopped the bleeding, and did all sorts of things for them. Please ‘em, let him off.”

“Well,” said the Dame, much affected, “kindness to the wounded shall plead his cause this once, and I will think of some punishment less severe. For I have hopes of Johnnie even yet, that he will rise to a sense of his high position in the school; and learn that duties cannot be coolly ignored, because they are disagreeable; that he who shirks the responsibility of doing right, does in very deed and truth do wrong; that the true test of greatness is the ability to grapple with great difficulties; that it is but a sorry thing to boast of bravery and skill and power, if, just at the very instant when you are called upon to act, your resources fail you, and you whine out the miserable excuse that ‘you don’t exactly see how you can interfere.’ If, indeed, such an excuse be allowed to stand—if it be really true that the head and champion of the school is thoroughly beaten by circumstances—utterly at a loss, at some critical moment, what is the right thing to do,—let him confess at once that

he is unequal to his place—that he is not the Boy we took him for—that his courage has been overrated, and his reputation as a hero too cheaply earned ; that for all his vaunted influence with others he is weak to stay an unrighteous strife—to avert a storm of cruel, savage blows—to spare the infliction of wounds which will lie gaping and unhealed for long long years to come, bearing on their ghastly face a bitter hatred for the foe that dealt them, and contempt for the ‘neutral’ friend who looked calmly on.”









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## THE FIGHT

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ENGLISH BOY LOOKED ON.

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## The Fight at Dame Europa's School.

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MRS. EUROPA kept a Dame's School, where Boys were well instructed in modern languages, fortification, and the use of the globes. Her connexion and credit were good, for there was no other school where so sound and liberal an education could be obtained. Many of her old pupils held Masterships in other important establishments, two of which may be mentioned as consisting chiefly of dark swarthy youths, decidedly stupid and backward for their years; while a third was a large modern Academy full of rather cocky fellows, who talked big about the institutions of their school, and talked, for the most part, through their nose.

The lads at Mrs. Europa's were of all sorts and sizes—good Boys and bad Boys, sharp Boys and slow Boys, industrious Boys and idle Boys, peaceable Boys and pugnacious Boys, well behaved Boys and vulgar Boys; and of course the good old dame could not possibly manage them all. So, as she did not like the masters to be prying about the playground out of school, she chose from among

the biggest and most trustworthy of her pupils five monitors, who had authority over the rest of the Boys, and kept the unruly ones in order. These five, at the time of which we are writing, were Louis, William, Aleck, Joseph, and John.

If a dispute arose among any of the smaller Boys, the monitors had to examine into its cause, and if possible to settle it amicably. Should it be necessary to fight the matter out, they were to see fair play, stop the encounter when it had gone far enough, and at all times to uphold justice, and prevent tyranny and bullying.

The power thus placed in their hands was for the most part exercised with discretion, and to the manifest advantage of the school. Trumpery little quarrels were patched up, which might otherwise have led to the patching up of bruises and black eyes ; and many a time, when two little urchins had retired with their backers into a corner of the playground to fight about nothing at all, did the dreaded appearance of Master Louis or Master John put them to flight, or force them to shake hands. The worst of it was that some of the monitors themselves occasionally took to bullying, and then of course it became more than ever the duty of the rest to interfere. There lingered a tradition in the school of a terrific row in times

past, when a monitor named Nicholas made a most unprovoked attack upon a quiet but very dirty little Boy called Constantine. John and Louis stuck up for the child boldly, and gave Nicholas such a thrashing that he never got over it, and soon afterwards left the school.

Each of the upper Boys at Dame Europa's had a little garden of his own, in a corner of the playground. The Boys took great interest in their gardens, and kept them very neatly. In some were grown flowers and fruit, in others mustard and cress or radishes, which the young cultivators would sell to one another and take into Hall, to help down their bread and scrape at tea time. Every garden had in the middle of it an arbour, fitted up according to the taste and means of its owner. Louis had the prettiest arbour of all, like a grotto in fairy land, full of the most beautiful flowers and ferns, with a vine creeping over the roof, and a little fountain playing inside. John's garden was pretty enough, and more productive than any; owing its chief beauty, however, to the fact that it was an Island, separated from all the rest by a stream, between twenty and thirty feet wide. But his arbour was a mere tool-house, where he shut himself up almost all play time turning at his lathe, or making nets or sharpening

knives, or cutting out boats to sail on the river. Still, John was fond of a holiday now and then ; and when he was tired of slaving away in his own garden, he would punt himself across the brook, and pay a visit to his neighbour Louis, who was always cheerful and hospitable, and glad to see him. Many and many a happy hour did he spend in his friend's arbour, lying at full length on the soft moss, and eating grapes and drinking lemonade, and thinking how much pleasanter it was over there than in his own close fusty shop, with its dirt and litter, and its eternal smell of tar, and nets, and shavings. Anyhow, thought Johnnie, I make more profit out of my garden than any of the other fellows, so I must put up with a few bad smells. For Dame Europa, by way of encouraging habits of industry, allowed the Boys to engage pretty extensively in commercial pursuits, and it was said that Master John, who had been working unusually hard of late, had sometimes trebled or quadrupled his half-yearly pocket money out of the produce of his tool-house and garden.

By the side of Louis' domain was that of William, the biggest and strongest of all the monitors. He set up, however, for being a very studious and peaceable Boy, and made the rest of the school believe that he had never provoked a

quarrel in his life. He was rather fond of singing psalms and carrying Testaments about in his pocket; and many of the Boys thought Master William a bit of a humbug. He was as proud as any body of his garden, but he never went to work in it without casting envious eyes on two little flower beds which now belonged to Louis, but which ought by rights, he thought, to belong to him. Indeed it was notorious that in old days, before either Louis or William came to the school, one of Louis' predecessors in the garden had pulled up some stakes which served for a boundary, and cribbed a piece of his neighbour's ground. For a long while William had set his heart upon getting it back again; but he kept his wishes to himself, and nobody suspected that so good and religious a Boy could be guilty of coveting what was admitted by the whole school to be now the property of another. Only one Boy, his favourite fag, did William take into his confidence in the matter. This was a sharp shrewd lad named Mark, not over scrupulous in what he did, full of deep tricks and dodges, and so cunning that the old dame herself, though she had the eyes of a hawk, never could catch him out in anything absolutely wrong. To this smart youth William one day whispered his desires, as they sat together

in the summer house smoking and drinking beer ; for I am sorry to say that they both smoked and drank almost all their play time, though of course it was against the rules of the school.

" There is only one way to do it," said Mark. " If you want the flower beds you must fight Louis for them, and I believe you will lick him all to smash ; but you must fight him alone."

" How do you mean ?" replied William.

" I mean, you must take care that the other monitors don't interfere in the quarrel. If they do, they will be sure to go against you. Remember what a grudge Joseph owes you for the licking you gave him not long ago ; and Aleck, though to be sure Louis took little. Constantine's part against him in that great bullying row, is evidently beginning to grow jealous of your influence in the school. You see, old fellow, you have grown so much lately, and filled out so wonderfully, that you are getting really quite formidable. Why, I recollect the time when you were quite a little chap !"

" Yes," said William, turning up his eyes devoutly, " it has pleased Providence that I should be stout."

" I dare say, but it has not pleased the other monitors. And they were very angry, you know,

when you took those little gardens belonging to some of the small Boys, and tacked them on to yours."

"But, my dear Mark, I did that by your own particular advice."

"Of course you did, and quite right too. The little beggars were not strong enough to work, and it was far better that you should look after their gardens for them, and give them a share of the produce. All the same, no doubt it made the other monitors jealous, and I am not sure that the old Dame herself thought it quite fair."

"Did you ever find out, Mark, what *he* thought of it?" asked William, winking his left eye, and jerking his thumb over his left shoulder towards the island.

"Oh," answered Mark, with a scornful laugh, "never you mind *him*. He won't meddle with any body. He is a deal too busy in that filthy, dirty shop of his, making things to sell to the other Boys. Bah! it makes me sick to think how that place smells!" and the fastidious youth took a long draught of beer, by way of recalling some more agreeable sensations.

"He is an uncommonly plucky fellow," said William, when they had smoked for a while in silence, "and as strong as a lion."

"As plucky and as strong as you please, my friend, but as lazy as ——," and here again Mark, being altogether at a loss for a simile, sought one at the bottom of the pewter. "Besides," he continued, when he had slaked his thirst, "he is never *ready*. Look what a precious mess he made of that affair with Nicholas. It was before you came, you know, but I recollect it well. Why, poor Johnnie had no shoes to fight in, and they had it out in the stoniest part of the playground, too, where his feet were cut to pieces. And then again he took it all so precious cool that he got late for breakfast in the morning, and had to fight on an empty stomach. Pluck and strength are all very well; but a fellow *must* eat and drink, and have a pair of decent shoes to stand up in."

"And why couldn't he get a pair of decent shoes?" asked William. "He has got heaps of money."

"Heaps upon heaps, but he wanted it for something else—to buy a new lathe, I think it was; and so he sat grinding away in his dirty shop, and thinking of nothing but saving up his sixpences and shillings."

"Then, my dear Mark, what do you advise me to do?"

"Ah, that is not so easy to say. Give me time

to think, and when I have an idea, I will let you know. Only, whatever you do, take care to put Master Louis in the wrong. Don't pick a quarrel with *him*, but force him, by quietly provoking him, to pick a quarrel with *you*. Give out that you are still peaceably disposed, and carry your Testament about as usual. That will put old Dame Europa off her guard, and she will believe in you as much as ever. The rest you may leave to me ; but, in the meantime, keep yourself in good condition ; and, if you can hear of anyone in the town who gives lessons in bruising, just go to him and get put up to a few dodges. I know for a fact that Louis has been training hard, and exercising his fists, ever since you gave that tremendous thrashing to Joseph."

The bell now rang for afternoon school, and the two friends hastily smothered their cigars, and finished between them what was left of the beer. Mark ran off to the pump to wash his hands, which no amount of scrubbing would ever make decently clean, while William changed his coat and walked sedately across the playground, humming to himself, not in very good tune, a verse of the Old Hundredth Psalm.

An opportunity of putting their little plot into execution soon occurred. A garden became vacant,

on the other side of Louis' little territory, which none of the Boys seemed much inclined to accept. It was a troublesome piece of ground, exposed to constant attacks from the town cads, who used to overrun it in the night, and pull up the newly-planted flowers. The cats, too, were fond of prowling about in it, and making havoc among the beds. Nobody bid for it, therefore, and it seemed to be going begging.

"Don't you think," said Mark one day to his friend and patron, "that your little cousin, the new Boy, might as well have that garden?"

"I don't see why he should not, if he wants it," replied William, by no means deep enough to understand what his faithful fag was driving at.

"It will be so nice for Louis, don't you see, to have William to keep him in check on one side, and William's little cousin to watch him on the other side," observed Mark innocently.

"Ah, to be sure," exclaimed William, beginning to wake up, "so it will; very nice indeed. Mark, you are a sly dog."

"I should say, if you paid Louis the compliment to propose it, that it is such a delicate little attention as he would never forget—even if you withdrew the proposal afterwards."

"Just so, my Boy, and then we shall have to

fight. But look here, won't the other chaps say that I have provoked the quarrel?"

"Not if we manage properly," was the reply. "They are sure to fix the cause of dispute on Louis, rather than on you. You are such a peaceable Boy, you know; and he has always been fond of a shindy."

So Dame Europa was asked to assign the vacant garden to William's little cousin. "Well," said she, "if Louis does not object, who will be his nearest neighbour, he may have it."

"But I *do* object, ma'am," cried Louis. "I very particularly object. I don't want to be hemmed in on all sides by William and his cousins. They will be walking through my garden to pay each other visits, and perhaps throwing balls to one another right across my lawn."

"Oh, but you might be sure that I should do nothing unfair," said William, reproachfully. "I have never attacked anybody," he continued, fumbling in his pocket for the Testament, and bringing out by mistake a baccy pouch and a flask of brandy instead, which, however, he was fortunately quick enough to conceal before the Dame had caught sight of them.

"That's all my eye," said Louis. "I don't believe in your piety. Come, take your dear little

relation off, and give him one of the snug corners that you bagged the other day from poor Christian."

"Oh, Louis," began William, looking as meek as possible, "you know I never bagged anything. I am a domestic peace-loving Boy ——"

"Very much so, indeed," cried Louis with a sneer. "It's lessons in *peacemaking*, I suppose, that you have been taking from the 'Brummagem Bruiser' for the last six months or more—the fellow that bragged to a friend of mine that, though you used to be the clumsiest fellow he ever set eyes on, he had made you *as sharp as a needle with your fists!*!"

"A friend of yours, you said, did you my dear? Perhaps that was the 'Sheffield Slasher,' who told my fag Mark that he had made your arms strong enough to throw a ball or a stone more than a hundred yards."

"Come, come," interposed the Dame, "I can't listen to such angry words. You five monitors must settle the matter quietly among yourselves; but no fighting, mind. The day for that sort of thing is quite gone by." And the old lady toddled off, and left the Boys alone.

"I would'n't press it, Bill, if I were you," said John, in his deep gruff voice, looking out of his shop window on the other side of the water. "I

think it's rather hard lines for Louis, I do indeed."

"Always ready to oblige you, my dear John," said William; and so the new Boy's claim to the garden was withdrawn.

"What shall I do now, Mark?" asked William, turning to his friend. "It seems to me that there is an end of it all."

"Not a bit," was the reply. "Louis is still as savage as a bear. He'll break out directly, you see if he don't."

"I have been grossly insulted," began Louis at last, in a towering passion, "and I shall not be satisfied unless William promises me never to make any such underhanded attempts to get the better of me again."

"Tell him to be hanged," whispered Mark.

"You be — no," said William, recollecting himself, "I never use bad language. My friend," he continued, "I cannot promise you anything of the kind."

"Then I shall lick you till you do, you psalm-singing humbug!" shouted Louis.

"Come on!" said William, lifting up his hand as if to commend his cause to heaven, and looking sanctimoniously out of the whites of his eyes. And it was well for him that Louis did not take

him at his word ; for, while one hand was lifted up, the other was encumbered with a bundle of good books which he was carrying to his summer-house, and it would not have required much to knock him down. But Louis did not feel quite well. He had taken a blue pill that morning, and he put off the attack therefore till he should meet his adversary again.

Meanwhile, by Mark's advice, William ran off to the Brummagem Bruiser, who put him up to all the latest dodges, and exercised him in the noble art to such good purpose that on his first encounter with Louis after breakfast the next morning he hit out a crushing blow from his shoulder and knocked his enemy down. Louis was soon on his legs again, and he too did good execution with his fists ; but he was clearly overmatched, and at the end of the first round had been punished pretty severely.

" Hot work, isn't it, my Boy ?" said William, chaffing him as he mopped the perspiration from his steaming forehead. " This is what you call your *Baptism of fire*, I suppose, aye ?" Then he wrote home to his mother, on the back of a half-penny post card, so that all the letter carriers might see how pious he was :—" Dear Mamma, I am fighting for my *Fatherland*, as you know I call

my garden. It is a fine name, and creates sympathy. Glorious news ! Aided by Providence, I have hit Louis in the eye. Thou may'st imagine his feelings. What wonderful events has Heaven thus brought about ! Your affectionate Son, William." Then he sang a hymn, and went on with the second round.

Meanwhile, the other monitors looked quietly on, not knowing exactly what to do.

" Oughtn't I to interfere ?" asked John, addressing one of his favourite fags.

" No," said Billy, who was head fag, and twisted Johnnie round his finger. " You just sit where you are. You will only make a mess of it, and offend both of them. Give out that you are a ' neutral.' "

" Neutral !" growled John, " I hate neutrals. It seems to me a cold-blooded cowardly thing to sit by and see two big fellows smash each other all to pieces about nothing at all. They are both in the wrong, and they ought not to fight. Let me go in at them."

" No, no," said Bobby, a clever fair-haired Boy, who kept John's accounts, and took care of his money. " You really can't afford it ; and besides, you've got no clothes to go in. There is not a fellow in the school who wouldn't laugh at you, if

you stood up in his garden. Sit still and grind away, old chap, and make some more money, and be thankful that you live on an island, and can take things easily."

"Well," said John sulkily, "I don't half like it, though certainly my clothes are not very respectable, and there is no time now to mend them. But look here, Bob ; I mean to go across and help to sponge the poor beggars, if they get mauled."

"You may do that, and welcome," replied Bobby. "You will make no enemies that way, and it may cost you perhaps eighteenpence in ointment and plaster. But bless you, Johnnie, if you were to rig yourself out well enough to hold your own against Louis or William, you would have to fork out a ten-pound note or more."

John went on with his work in rather a grumpy humour, for he had always been looked up to as the leading Boy in the school, and he did not like to play second fiddle. He felt sure that if he had been half so natty and well got up as he used to be, he might have stopped the fight in a moment. For the next half hour he cursed Billy and Bobby, and all the other little sneaks who had wormed themselves into favour with him, by teaching him to save money. "Hang the money!" growled Johnnie to himself; "I'd give up half my shop to

get my old *prestige* back again." But it was too late now. Nevertheless, he had his own way about the sponging, and certainly he did behave well there. At the end of every round that was fought, he got across the stream, and bathed poor Louis' head, for he wanted help the most, and gave him sherry and water out of his own flask. "I am so very sorry for you, my dear Louis," said he, as the Boy, more dead than alive, struggled up to his feet again.

"Thank you kindly, John," said Louis; "but," he added, looking somewhat reproachfully at his friend, "why don't you separate us? Don't you see that this great brute is too many for me? I had no idea that he could fight like that."

"What can I do?" said John. "You began it, you know, and you really must fight it out. I have no power."

"So it seems," replied Louis. "Ah, there *was* a time—well, thank you kindly, John, for—the sticking plaster."

"Come on!" shouted William, thirsting for more blood.

"*Vive la guerre!*" cried poor Louis, rushing blindly at his foe. Well and nobly he fought, but he could not stand his ground. When he did hit, indeed, he hit to some purpose; but seldom could

he reach out far enough to do much damage. Foot by foot and yard by yard he gave way, till at last he was forced to take refuge in his arbour, from the window of which he threw stones at his enemy, to keep him back from following.

Louis was plainly in the wrong. He ought to have calculated the other Boy's strength before attacking him, and he deserved a licking for his rashness. But he had had his licking now; and when William, who talked so big about his peaceable disposition, and declared that he only wanted to defend his "fatherland," chased him right across the garden, trampling over beds and borders on his way, and then swore that he would break down his beautiful summer-house, and bring Louis on his knees, everybody felt that the other monitors ought to interfere. But not a foot would they stir. Aleck looked on from a safe distance, wondering which of the combatants would be tired first. Joseph stood shivering with fright, not daring to say a word, lest William should turn round upon him, and thrash him again; and John sat in his shop, grinding away like a nigger at a new rudder and a pair of oars which he was cutting out for Louis' boat, in case he wanted to take advantage of the brook—for which service Louis would pay him handsomely and William abuse him cordially.

"I can't help it," said John, apologetically, "I'll make a rudder and some oars for you too, and a boat besides, if you want one—that is, of course, if you will pay me well."

"But I *don't* want one," answered William angrily. "I have got no water to float it in, as you very well know." By which it will appear that John did not make many friends by his neutrality. "And just look here," continued William, "do you know where these cuts on my forehead came from? Why, from stones which you pitched across the water for Louis to throw at me."

"Can't help it, Bill; it is the law of neutrality."

"Neutrality, indeed! I call it Brutality." And so William went across the garden again, leaving Johnnie at his work—of which, however, he began to feel thoroughly ashamed.

"Come and help a fellow, John," cried Louis in despair from his arbour. "I don't ask you to remember the days we have spent in here together, when you have been sick of your own shop. But you might do something for me, now that I am in such a desperate fix, and don't know which way to turn."

"I am very sorry, Louis," said John, "but what can I do? It is no pleasure to me to see

you thrashed. On the contrary, it would pay me much better to have a near neighbour well off and cheerful than crushed and miserable. Why don't you give in, Louis ? It is of no mortal use to go on. He will make friends directly if you will give back the two little strips of garden ; and if you don't, he will only smash your arbour to pieces, or keep you shut up there all dinner time, and starve you out. Give in, old fellow. There's no disgrace in it. Everybody says how pluckily you have fought."

"Give in !" sneered Louis, "that is all the comfort you have for a fellow, is it ? Give in ! why, would *you* give in, if that great brute was in front of your shop, swearing that he would break it down ? No disgrace, indeed ! No, I don't think there is any disgrace in anything that *I* have done ; but though my dear dear arbour that I have spent so many weeks in building should be pulled down about my ears, and every flower in my garden be rooted up, I would not change places with you, John, sitting there sleek and safe—no, not for all the gold that ever was coined ! Give in, indeed ! *Mon Dieu !* that I should ever have heard such a word as that come across our little stream !"

So Johnnie began to discover that, if lookers-on

see the most of the game, they do not always get the most enjoyment out of it. But the bell now rang for dinner, and he followed the rest of the Boys with some anxiety, not being quite easy in his mind as to the account he would have to give to Mrs. Europa of what had been going on.

"Louis and William are very late to-day," observed the Dame, when dinner was half over. "Does any one know where they are?" And then bit by bit she learned from some of the Boys sitting near her the whole story.

"And pray, John, why did you not separate them?" demanded the Dame.

"Please ma'am," answered Johnnie, "I was a neutral."

"A what, sir?" said she.

"A neutral, ma'am."

"Just precisely what you had no business to be," she returned. "You were placed in authority in order that you might *act*, not that you might stand aloof from acting. Any baby can do that. I might as well have made little Georgie here a monitor, if I had meant him to have nothing to do. Neutral, indeed! *Neutral* is just a fine name for *Coward*. Besides, there is no such thing. You *must* take one side or the other, do what you will. Now, which side did you take, I wonder?"

A titter ran round the room, and the little Boys began to whisper to one another something which appeared to be in their small estimation an excellent joke. It was good fun to them to see a monitor badgered, even if they should get paid out for it afterwards.

"What are you saying?" said the Dame. "Both sides, aye? Well, and how did you manage that, Master John?"

There was some more tittering and whispering and shuffling about on the forms, and then a chorus of voices said, "Please 'em, he *sucked up to both of them.*'"

"Just what 'neutrals' always do," said Mrs. Europa; "sucked up to both, I suppose, and pleased neither. Ah, no doubt," she continued, gradually gathering information, "offended Louis by always preaching at him that he was in the wrong; and offended William, by supplying Louis with stones. Now, I tell you what it is, John. I have long watched your career with pain, and have seen how you are content to sacrifice everything—duty, and influence, and honour,—for the sake of putting by a few paltry shillings. You have been badly advised. You have chosen to have about you a set of fags who are no credit to anybody, simply because they make better bargains for you

in the things you sell to the other Boys ; and now you see the consequence. If such fellows as Ben and Hugh had been your fags, you know very well that this disgraceful scene would never have taken place at all. You would have been sufficiently well trained and well equipped to command the respect of the other monitors, and the two rivals would not have dared to come to blows. There *was* a time when, if you so much as held up your finger, the whole school would tremble. Nobody trembles now. Nobody cares one farthing what you think or say. And why ? because you have grown a sloven and a screw, and Boys despise both the one and the other. You ought to have prevented the fight from the very first. Failing this, you ought, in conjunction with the other Monitors, to have stepped in the moment the Boys had proved their relative strength, and struck a fair balance between them. Instead of doing so, you sit coolly in your shop, supplying the means of carrying on the fight, and coining a few wretched coppers out of your schoolfellows' blows and wounds. You have been a bad friend to both of them. Well, some day, perhaps, you may want friends yourself. When you do, I hope you may find them. Take care that William, the *peaceable unaggressive* Boy, does not contrive (as

I fully believe he will contrive) to get a footing on the river, where he can keep a boat, and then one fine morning take your pretty island by surprise."

"It was Louis' own fault, ma'am," urged John. "He began it all. William was only defending his Fatherland."

"Defending his Grandmotherland!" retorted the Dame contemptuously. "It looks very like self-defence, to chase a Boy half across the playground and threaten to kick down his arbour. Very like self-defence, to train hard for six months, and then propose something which is certain to create a row. And although Louis has been in the wrong, he has also been severely punished, and it is time that he should be relieved. What! Are those who make mistakes never to be helped out of them? Is it any the less incumbent on the strong to protect the weak, because the weak has got himself into a mess by his own fault? However, there is some excuse for William, who is half mad with the fever of success; but there is no excuse for you, who have sat still in cold blood and looked on. You have abused the trust committed to you as one of the five monitors of this school, and your office shall be taken from you——"

"Please 'em," said a chorus of little Boys together, "please 'em, do let him off this time.

He was *so* kind to Louis and William when they were bad. He brought them water, and bathed their faces, and stopped the bleeding, and did all sorts of things for them. Please 'em, let him off."

"Well," said the Dame, much affected, "kindness to the wounded shall plead his cause this once, and I will think of some punishment less severe. For I have hopes of Johnnie even yet, that he will rise to a sense of his high position in the school; and learn that duties cannot be coolly ignored, because they are disagreeable; that he who shirks the responsibility of doing right, does in very deed and truth do wrong; that the true test of greatness is the ability to grapple with great difficulties; that it is but a sorry thing to boast of bravery and skill and power, if, just at the very instant when you are called upon to act, your resources fail you, and you whine out the miserable excuse that 'you don't exactly see how you can interfere.' If, indeed, such an excuse be allowed to stand—if it be really true that the head and champion of the school is thoroughly beaten by circumstances—utterly at a loss, at some critical moment, what is the right thing to do; let him confess at once that he is unequal to his place—that he is not the Boy we took him for—that his courage has been overrated, and his reputation as

a hero too cheaply earned ; that for all his vaunted influence with others he is too weak to stay an unrighteous strife—to avert a storm of cruel, savage blows—to spare the infliction of wounds which will lie gaping and unhealed for long long years to come, bearing on their ghastly face a bitter hatred for the foe that dealt them, and contempt for the ‘neutral’ friend who looked calmly on.”

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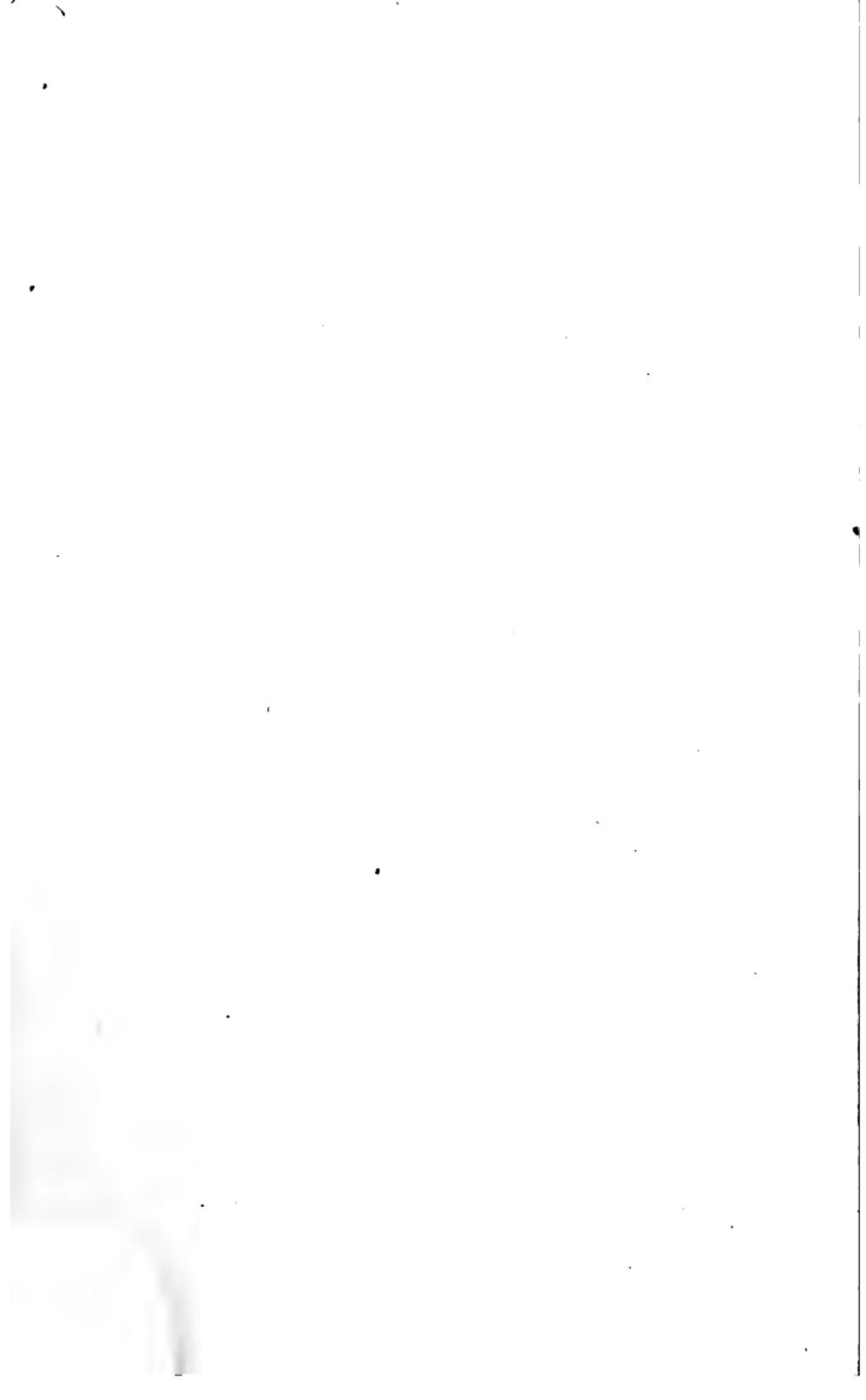
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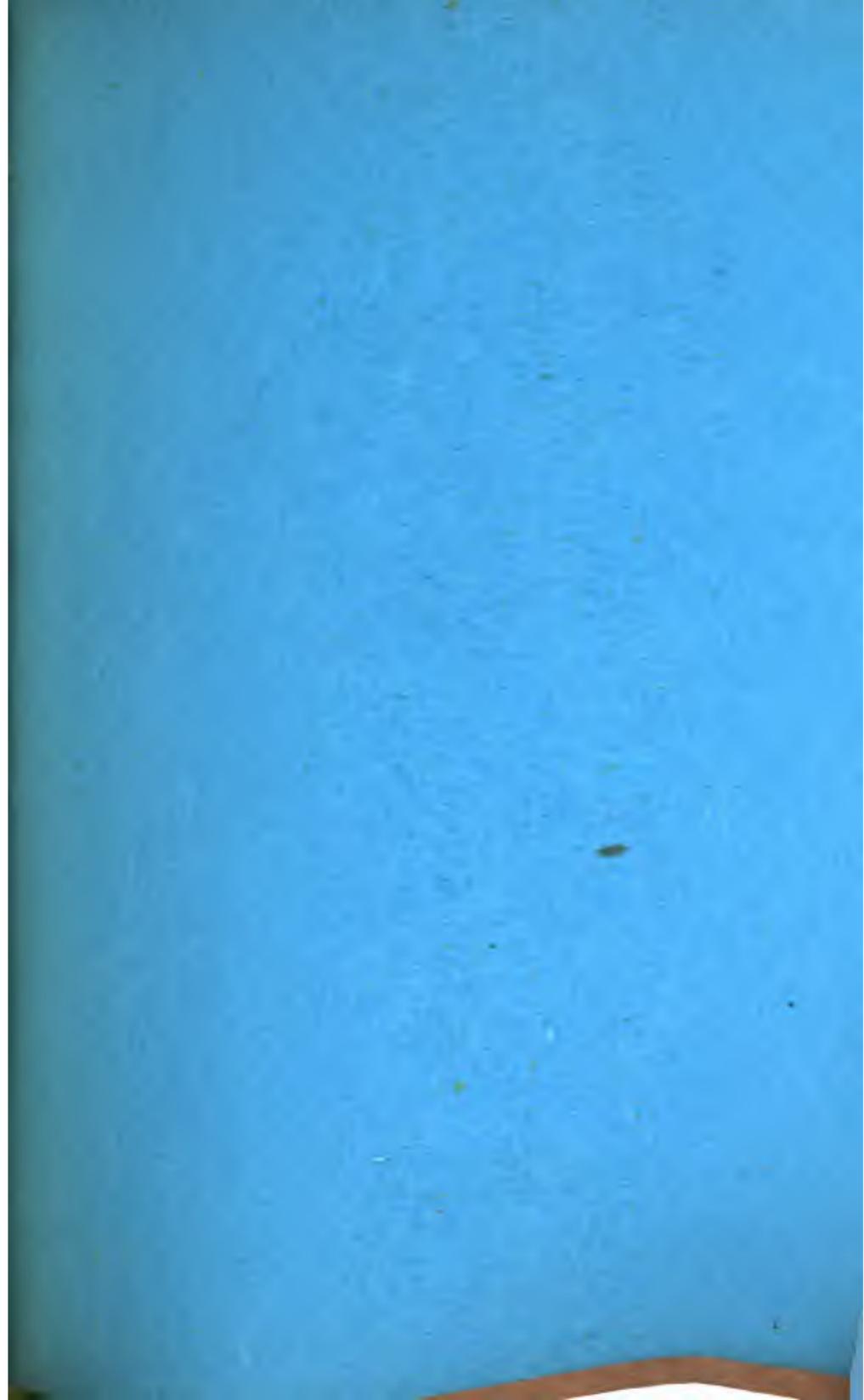
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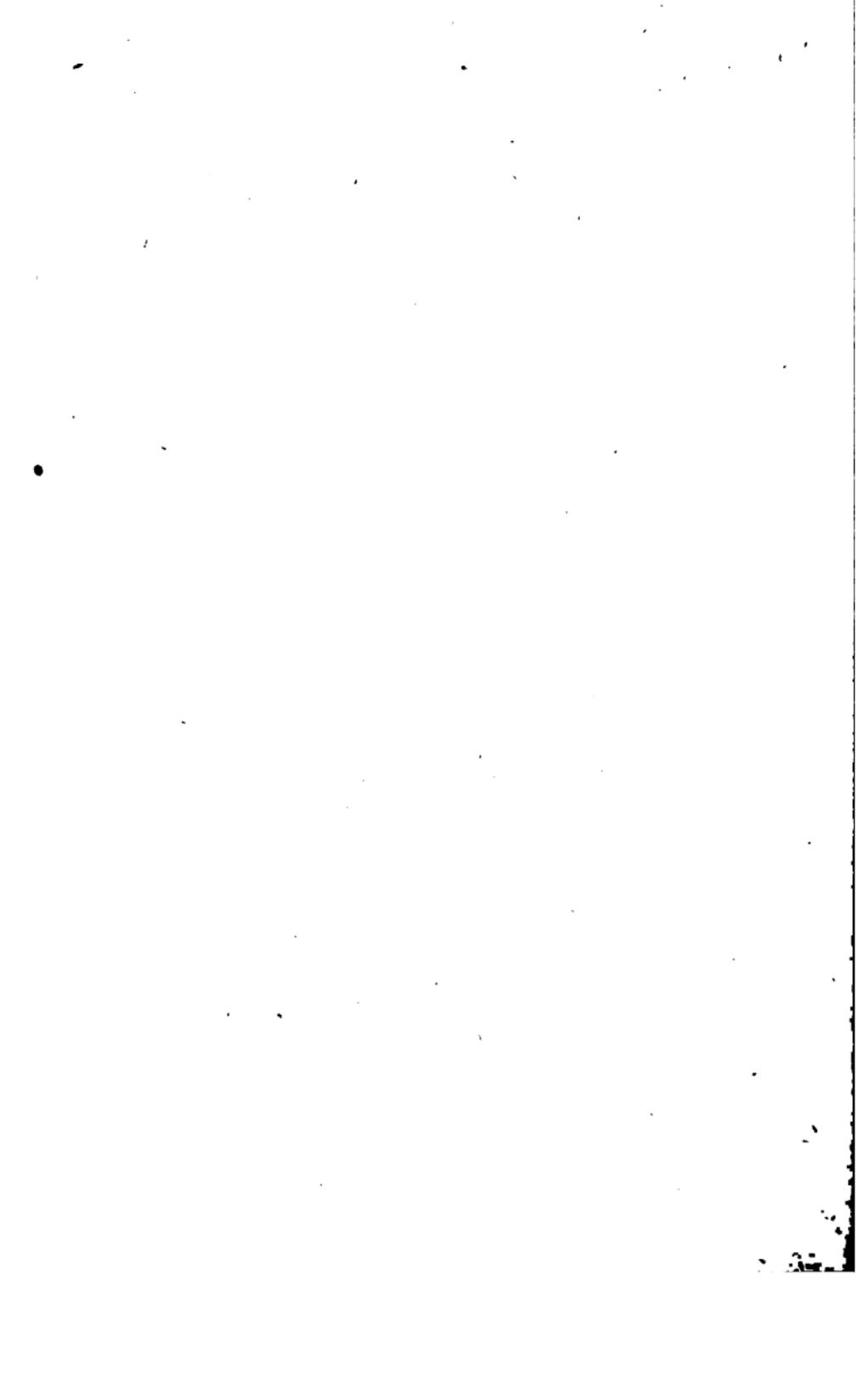
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MRS. EUROPA kept a Dame's School, where Boys were well instructed in modern languages, fortification, and the use of the globes. Her connexion and credit were good, for there was no other school where so sound and liberal an education could be obtained. Many of her old pupils held Masterships in other important establishments, two of which may be mentioned as consisting chiefly of dark swarthy youths, decidedly stupid and backward for their years ; while a third was a large modern Academy full of rather cocky fellows, who talked big about the institutions of their school, and talked, for the most part through their nose.

The lads at Mrs. Europa's, were of all sorts and sizes—good Boys and bad Boys, sharp Boys

and slow Boys, industrious Boys and idle Boys, peaceable Boys and pugnacious Boys, well behaved Boys and vulgar Boys ; and of course the good old dame could not possibly manage them all. So, as she did not like the masters to be prying about the playground out of school, she chose from among the biggest and most trustworthy of her pupils five monitors, who had authority over the rest of the Boys, and kept the unruly ones in order. These five, at the time of which we are writing, were Louis, William, Aleck, Joseph, and John.

If a dispute arose among any of the smaller Boys, the monitors had to examine into its cause, and if possible to settle it amicably. Should it be necessary to fight the matter out, they were to see fair play, stop the encounter when it had gone far enough, and at all times to uphold justice, and prevent tyranny and bullying.

The power thus placed in their hands was for the most part exercised with discretion, and to the manifest advantage of the school. Trumpery little quarrels were patched up, which might otherwise have led to the patching up of bruises and black eyes ; and many a time, when two little urchins had retired with their backers into a corner of the playground to fight about nothing at all, did the dreaded appearance of Master Louis

or Master John put them to flight, or force them to shake hands. The worst of it was that some of the monitors themselves occasionally took to bullying, and then of course it became more than ever the duty of the rest to interfere. There lingered a tradition in the school of a terrific row in times past, when a monitor named Nicholas made a most unprovoked attack upon a quiet but very dirty little Boy called Constantine. John and Louis stuck up for the child boldly, and gave Nicholas such a thrashing that he never got over it, and soon afterwards left the school.

Each of the upper Boys at Dame Europa's had a little garden of his own, in a corner of the playground. The Boys took great interest in their gardens, and kept them very neatly. In some were grown flowers and fruits, in others mustard and cress and radishes, which the young cultivators would sell to one another and take into Hall, to help down their bread and scrape at tea time. Every garden had in the middle of it an arbour, fitted up according to the taste and means of its owner. Louis had the prettiest arbour of all, like a grotto in fairy land, full of the most beautiful flowers and ferns, with a vine creeping over the roof, and a little fountain playing inside. John's garden was pretty enough, and more productive than any ; owing its chief beauty, how-

ever, to the fact that it was an Island, separated from all the rest by a stream, between twenty and thirty feet wide. But his arbour was a mere tool-house, where he shut himself up almost all play time turning at his lathe, or making nets or sharpening knives, or cutting out boats to sail on the river. Still, John was fond of a holiday now and then; and when he was tired of slaving away in his own garden, he would punt himself across the brook, and pay a visit to his neighbor Louis, who was always cheerful and hospitable, and glad to see him. Many and many a happy hour did he spend in his friend's arbour, lying at full length on the soft moss, and eating grapes and drinking lemonade, and thinking how much pleasanter it was over there than in his own close fusty shop, with its dirt and litter, and its eternal smell of tar, and nets and shavings. Anyhow, thought Johnnie, I make more profit out of my garden than any of the other fellows, so I must put up with a few bad smells. For Dame Europa, by way of encouraging habits of industry, allowed the boys to engage pretty extensively in commercial pursuits, and it was said that Master John, who had been working unusually hard of late, had sometimes trebled or quadrupled his half-yearly pocket money out of the produce of his tool-house and garden.

By the side of Louis' domain was that of William, the biggest and strongest of all the monitors. He set up, however, for being a very studious and peaceable Boy, and made the rest of the school believe that he had never provoked a quarrel in his life. He was rather fond of singing psalms and carrying Testaments about in his pocket, and many of the Boys thought Master William a bit of a humbug. He was as proud as any body of his garden, but he never went to work in it without casting envious eyes on two little flower beds which now belonged to Louis, but which ought, by rights, he thought, to belong to him. Indeed it was notorious that in old days, before either Louis or William came to the school, one of Louis' predecessors in the garden had pulled up some stakes which served for a boundary, and cribbed a piece of his neighbour's ground. For a long time William had set his heart on getting it back again ; but he kept his wishes to himself, and nobody suspected that so good and religious a Boy could be guilty of coveting what was admitted by the whole school to be now the property of another. Only one Boy, his favourite fag, did William take into his confidence in the matter. This was a sharp shrewd lad named Mark, not over scrupulous in what he did, full of deep tricks and dodges, and

so cunning that the old dame herself, though she had the eyes of a hawk, never could catch him out in anything absolutely wrong. To this smart youth William one day whispered his desires, as they sat together in the summer house smoking and drinking beer; for I am sorry to say that they both smoked and drank almost all their play time, though of course it was against the rules of the school.

"There is only one way to do it," said Mark, "If you want the flower beds you must fight Louis for them, and I believe you will lick him all to smash; but you must fight him alone."

"How do you mean?" replied William.

"I mean, you must take care that the other monitors don't interfere in the quarrel. If they do, they will be sure to go against you. Remember what a grudge Joseph owes you for the licking you gave him not long ago; and Aleck, though to be sure Louis took little Constantine's part against him in that great bullying row, is evidently beginning to grow jealous of your influence in the school. You see old fellow, you have grown so much lately, and filled out so wonderfully, that you are getting really more formidable. Why, I recollect the time when you were quite a little chap!"

"Yes," said William, turning up his eyes de-

voutly, "it has pleased Providence that I should be stout."

"I dare say, but it has not pleased the other monitors. And they were very angry, you know when you took those little gardens belonging to some of the small Boys, and tacked them on to yours."

"But, my dear Mark, I did that by your own particular advice."

"Of course you did, and quite right too. The little beggars were not strong enough to work, and it was far better that you should look after their gardens for them, and give them a share of the produce. All the same, no doubt it made the other monitors jealous, and I am not sure that the old Dame herself thought it quite fair."

"Did you ever find out, Mark, what *he* thought of it ?" asked William, winking his left eye, and jerking his thumb over his left shoulder towards the island.

"Oh," answered Mark; with a scornful laugh, "never you mind *him*. He won't meddle with any body. He is a deal too busy in that filthy, dirty shop of his, making things to sell the other Boys. Bah ! it makes me sick to think how that place smells !" and the fastidious youth took a long draught of beer, by way of recalling some more agreeable sensations.

"He is an uncommonly plucky fellow," said William, when they had smoked for a while in silence, "and as strong as a lion."

"As plucky and as strong as you please, my friend, but as lazy as——," and here again Mark, being altogether at a loss for a smile, sought one at the bottom of the pewter. "Besides," he continued, when he had slacked his thirst, "he is never *ready*. Look what a precious mess he made of that affair with Nicholas. It was before you came, you know, but I recollect it well. Why, poor Johnnie had no shoes to fight in, and they had it out in the stoniest part of the play ground, too, where his feet were cut to pieces. And then again he took it all so precious cool that he got late for breakfast in the morning, and had to fight on an empty stomach. Pluck and strength are all very well; but a fellow *must* eat and drink, and have a pair of decent shoes to stand up in."

"And why couldn't he get a pair of decent shoes?" asked William. "He has got heaps of money."

"Heaps upon heaps, but he wanted it for something else—to buy a new lathe, I think it was; and so he sat grinding away in his dirty shop, and thinking of nothing but saving up his sixpences and shillings."

"Then my dear Mark, what do you advise me to do?"

"Ah, that is not so easy to say. Give me time to think, and when I have an idea, I will let you know. Only, whatever you do, take care to put Master Louis in the wrong. Don't pick a quarrel with *him*, but force him, by quietly provoking *him*, to pick a quarrel with *you*. Give out that you are still peaceably disposed, and carry your Testament about as usual. That will put old Dame Europa off her guard, and she will believe in you as much as ever. The rest you may leave to to me ; but, in the meantime, keep yourself in good condition ; and, if you can hear of anyone in the town who gives lessons in bruising, just go to him and get put up to a few dodges. I know for a fact that Louis has been training hard, and exercising his fists, ever since you gave that tremendous thrashing to Joseph."

The bell now rang for afternoon school, and the two friends hastily smothered their cigars, and finished between them what was left of the beer. Mark ran off to the pump to wash his hands, which no amount of scrubbing would ever make decently clean, while William changed his coat, and walked sedately across the playground, humming to himself, not in very

good tune, a verse of the Old Hundredth Psalm.

An opportunity of putting their little plot into execution soon occurred. A garden became vacant on the other side of Louis' little territory, which none of the Boys seem much inclined to accept. It was a troublesome piece of ground, exposed to constant attacks from the town cads, who used to overrun it in the night, and pull up the newly-planted flowers. The cats, too, were fond of prowling about in it, and making havoc among the beds. Nobody bid for it, therefore, and it seemed to be going begging.

"Do you think," said Mark one day to his friend and patron, "that your little cousin, the new Boy, might as well have that garden?"

"I don't see why he should not, if he wants it," replied William, by no means deep enough to understand what his faithful fag was driving at.

"It will be so nice for Louis, don't you see, to have William to keep him in check on one side, and William's little cousin to watch him on the other side," observed Mark innocently.

"Ah, to be sure," exclaimed William, beginning to wake up, "so it will; very nice indeed Mark you are a sly dog."

"I should say, if you paid Louis the compli-

ment to propose it, that it is such a delicate little attention as he would never forget—even if you withdrew the proposal afterwards."

"Just so, my Boy, and then we shall have to fight. But look here, won't the other chaps say that I have provoked the quarrel?"

"Not if we manage properly," was the reply. "They are sure to fix the cause of dispute on Louis, rather than on you. You are such a peaceable Boy, you know; and he has always been fond of a shindy."

So Dame Europa was asked to assign the vacant garden to William's little cousin. "Well," said she, "if Louis does not object, who will be his nearest neighbour, he may have it."

"But I *do* object, ma'am," cried Louis. "I very particularly object. I don't want to be hemmed in on all sides by William and his cousins. They will be walking through my garden to pay each other visits, and perhaps throwing balls to one another right across my lawn."

"Oh, but you might be sure that I should do nothing unfair," said William, reproachfully. "I have never attacked anybody," he continued, fumbling in his pocket for the Testament, and bringing out by mistake a baccy pouch and a flask of brandy instead, which, however, he was fortu-

nately quick enough to conceal before the Dame had caught sight of them.

"That's all my eye," said Louis. "I don't believe in your piety. Come, take your dear little relation off, and give him one of the snug corners that you bagged the other day from poor Christian."

"Oh, Louis," began William, looking as meek as possible, "you know I never bagged anything. I am a domestic peace-loving Boy——."

"Very much so," indeed, cried Louis with a sneer. "It's lessons in *peacemaking*, I suppose, that you have been taking from the 'Brummagem Bruiser' for the last six months or more—the fellow that bragged to a friend of mine that, though you used to be the clumsiest fellow he ever set eyes on, he had made you *as sharp as a needle* with your fists!"

"A friend of yours, you said, did you my dear? Perhaps that was the 'Sheffield Slasher,' who told my fag Mark that he had made your arms strong enough to throw a ball or a stone more than a hundred yards."

"Come, come," interposed the Dame, "I can't listen to such angry words. You five monitors must settle the matter quietly among yourselves; but no fighting, mind. The day for that sort of thing is quite gone by." And the o'd lady toddled off, and left the Boys alone.

"I wouldn't press it, Bill, if I were you," said John, in his deep gruff voice, looking out of his shop window on the other side of the water. "I think it's rather hard lines for Louis, I do indeed."

"Always ready to oblige you, my dear John," said William; and so the new Boy's claim to the garden was withdrawn.

"What shall I do now, Mark?" asked William, turning to his friend. "It seems to me that there is an end of it all."

"Not a bit," was the reply. "Louis is still as savage as a bear. He'll break out directly, you see if he don't."

"I have been grossly insulted," began Louis at last, in a towering passion, "and I shall not be satisfied unless William promises me never to make any such underhanded attempts to get the better of me again."

"Tell him to be hanged," whispered Mark.

"You be — no," said William, recollecting himself, "I never use bad language. My friend," he continued, "I cannot promise you anything of the kind."

"Then I shall lick you till you do, you psalm-singing humbug!" shouted Louis.

"Come on!" said William, lifting up his hand as if to command his cause to heaven, and looking

sanctimoniously out of the whites of his eyes. And it was well for him that Louis did not take him at his word ; for, while one hand was lifted up, the other was encumbered with a bundle of good books which he was carrying to his summer-house, and it would not have required much to knock him down. But Louis did not feel quite well. He had taken a blue pill that morning, and he put off the attack therefore till he should meet his adversary again.

Meanwhile, by Mark's advice, William ran off to the Brummagem Bruiser, who put him up to all the latest dodges, and exercised him in the noble art to such good purpose that on his first encounter with Louis after breakfast the next morning he hit out a crushing blow from his shoulder and knocked his enemy down. Louis was soon on his legs again, and he too did good execution with his fists ; but he was clearly overmatched, and at the end of the first round had been punished pretty severely.

" Hot work, isn't it, my Boy ?" said William, chaffing him as he mopped the perspiration from his steaming forehead. " This is what you call your *Baptism of fire*, I suppose, aye ?" Then he wrote home to his mother, on the back of a half-penny post card, so that all the letter carriers

might see how pious he was :—“ Dear Mamma, I am fighting for my *Fatherland*, as you know I call my garden. It is a fine name, and creates sympathy. Glorious news ! Aided by Providence, I have hit Louis in the eye. Thou may’st imagine his feelings. What wonderful events has Heaven thus brought about ! Your affectionate Son, William.” Then he sang a hymn, and went on with the second round.

Meanwhile, the other monitors looked quietly on, not knowing exactly what to do.

“ Oughtn’t I to interfere ? ” asked John, addressing one of his favorite fags.

“ No,” said Billy, who was head fag, and twisted Johnnie round his finger. “ You just sit where you are. You will only make a mess of it, and offend both of them. Give out that you are a ‘ neutral.’ ”

“ Neutral ! ” growled John, “ I hate neutrals. It seems to me a cold-blooded, cowardly thing to sit by and see two big fellows smash each other all to pieces about nothing at all. They are both in the wrong, and they ought not to fight. Let me go in at them.”

“ No, no,” said Bobby, a clever fair-haired Boy, who kept John’s accounts, and took care of his money. “ You really can’t afford it ; and besides,

you've got no clothes to go in. There is not a fellow in the school who wouldn't laugh at you, if you stood up in his garden. Sit still and grind away, old chap, and make some more money, and be thankful that you live on an island, and can take things easily."

"Well," said John sulkily, "I don't half like it, though certainly my clothes are not very respectable, and there is no time now to mend them. But look here, Bob; I mean to go across and help to sponge the poor beggars, if they get mauled."

"You may do that, and welcome," replied Bobby. "You will make no enemies that way, and it may cost you perhaps eighteenpence in ointment and plaster. But bless you, Johnnie, if you were to rig yourself out well enough to hold your own against Louis or William, you would have to fork out a ten-pound note or more."

John went on with his work in rather a grumpy humour, for he had always been looked up to as the leading Boy in the school, and he did not like to play second fiddle. He felt sure that if he had been half so natty and well got up as he used to be, he might have stopped the fight in a moment. For the next half hour he cursed Billy and Bobby, and all the other little sneaks who had wormed themselves into favour with him, by teaching him to save money. "Hang the money!" growled

Johnnie to himself, "I'd give up half my shop to get my old *prestige* back again." But it was too late now. Nevertheless, he had his own way about the sponging, and certainly he did behave well there. At the end of every round that was fought, he got across the stream, and bathed poor Louis' head, for he wanted help the most, and gave him sherry and water out of his own flask. "I am so sorry for you, my dear Louis," said he, as the Boy, more dead than alive, struggled to his feet again.

"Thank you kindly, John," said Louis, "but," he added, looking somewhat reproachfully at his friend, "why don't you separate us? Don't you see that this great brute is too many for me? I had no idea that he could fight like that."

"What can I do?" said John. "You began it, you know, and you really must fight it out. I have no power."

"So it seems," replied Louis. "Ah, there was a time—well, thank you kindly, John, for—the sticking plaster."

"Come on!" shouted William, thirsting for more blood.

"*Vive la guerre!*" cried poor Louis, rushing blindly at his foe. Well and nobly he fought, but he could not stand his ground. When he did hit,

indeed, he hit to some purpose; but seldom could he reach out far enough to do much damage. Foot by foot and yard by yard he gave way, till at last he was forced to take refuge in his arbour, from the window of which he threw stones at his enemy, to keep him back from following.

Louis was plainly in the wrong. He ought to have calculated the other Boy's strength before attacking him, and he deserved a licking for his rashness. But he had had his licking now; and when William, who talked so big about his peaceable disposition, and declared that he only wanted to defend his "fatherland," chased him right across the garden, trampling over beds and borders on his way, and then swore that he would break down his beautiful summer-house, and bring Louis on his knees, everybody felt that the other monitors ought to interfere. But not a foot would they stir. Aleck looked on from a safe distance, wondering which of the combatants would be tired first. Joseph stood shivering with fright, not daring to say a word, lest William should turn round upon him, and thrash him again; and John sat in his shop, grinding away like a nigger at a new rudder and a pair of oars which he was cutting out for Louis' boat, in case he wanted to take advantage of the brook—for which service

Louis would pay him handsomely and William abuse him cordially.

"I can't help it," said John, apologetically, "I'll make a rudder and some oars for *you* too, and a boat besides, if you want one—that is, of course, if you pay me well."

"But I *don't* want one," answered William angrily. "I have got no water to float it in, as you very well know." By which it will appear that John did not make many friends by his neutrality. And just look here," continued William, "do you know where these cuts on my forehead came from? Why, from stones which you pitched across the water for Louis to throw at me."

"Can't help it, Bill; it is the law of neutrality."

"Neutrality, indeed! I call it Brutality." And so William went across the garden again, leaving Johnnie at his work—of which, however, he began to feel thoroughly ashamed.

"Come and help a fellow, John," cried Louis, in despair from his arbour. "I don't ask you to remember the days we have spent in here together, when you have been sick of your own shop. But you might do something for me, now that I am in such a desperate fix, and don't know which way to turn."

"I am very sorry, Louis," said John, "but what can I do? It is no pleasure to me to see you thrashed. On the contrary, it would pay me much better to have a near neighbour well off and cheerful than crushed and miserable. Why don't you give in, Louis? It is of no mortal use to go on. He will make friends directly if you will give back the two little strips of garden; and if you don't he will only smash your arbour to pieces, or keep you shut up there all dinner time, and starve you out. Give in, old fellow. There's no disgrace in it. Everybody says how pluckily you have fought,"

"Give in!" sneered Louis, "that is all the comfort you have for a fellow, is it? Give in! why, would *you* give in, if that great brute was in front of your shop, swearing that he would break it down? No disgrace, indeed! No, I don't think there is any disgrace in anything that *I* have done; but though my dear, dear arbour, that I have spent so many weeks in building should be pulled down about my ears, and every flower in my garden be rooted up, I would not change places with you, John, sitting there, sleek and safe—no, not for all the gold that ever was coined! Give in, indeed! *Mon Dieu!* that I should ever have heard such a word as that come across our little stream!"

So Johnnie began to discover that, if lookers-on see the most of the game, they do not always get the most enjoyment out of it. But the bell now rang for dinner, and he followed the rest of the Boys with some anxiety, not being quite easy in his mind as to the account he would have to give to Mrs. Europa of what had been going on.

"Louis and William are very late to-day," observed the Dame, when dinner was half over. "does any one know where they are?" And then, bit by bit, she learned from some of the Boys sitting near her the whole story.

"And pray, John, why did you not separate them?" demanded the Dame.

"Please ma'am, answered Johnnie, "I was a *neutral*."

"A what, sir?" said she.

"A neutral, ma'am."

"Just precisely what you had no business to be," she returned. "You were placed in authority in order that you might *act*, not that you might stand aloof from acting. Any baby can do that. I might as well have made little Georgie here a monitor, if I had meant him to have nothing to do. Neutral, indeed! *Neutral* is just a fine name for *Coward*. Besides, there is no such thing. You *must* take one side or the

other, do what you will. Now, which side did you take, I wonder?"

A titter ran round the room, and the little Boys began to whisper to one another something which appeared to be in their small estimation an excellent joke. It was good fun to them to see a monitor badgered, even if they should get paid out for it afterwards.

"What are you saying?" said the Dame, "Both sides, aye? Well, and how did you manage that, Master John?"

There was some more tittering and whispering and shuffling about on the forms, and then a chorus of voices said, "Please 'em. he *sucked up to both of them.*"

"Just what 'neturals' always do," said Mrs. Europa; "sucked up both, I suppose, and pleased neither. Ah, no doubt," she continued, gradually gathering information, "offended Louis by always preaching at him that he was in the wrong; and offended William, by supplying Louis with stone. Now, I tell you what it is, John: I have long watched your career with pain, and have seen how you are content to sacrifice everything—duty, and influence, and honor,—for the sake of putting by a few paltry shillings. You have been badly advised. You have chosen to have about you a set

of fags, who are no credit to any body, simply because they make better bargains for you in the things you sell to the other Boys ; and now you see the consequence. If such fellows as Ben and Hugh had been your fags, you know very well that this disgraceful scene would never have taken place to all. You would have been sufficiently well trained and well equipped to command the respect of the other monitors, and the two rivals would not have dared to come to blows. There *was* a time when, if you so much as held up your finger, the whole school would tremble. Nobody trembles now. Nobody cares one farthing what you think or say. And why ? because you have grown a sloven and a screw, and Boys despise both the one and the other. You ought to have prevented the fight from the very first. Failing this, you ought, in conjunction with the other Monitors, to have stepped in the moment the Boys had proved their relative strength, and struck a fair balance between them. Instead of doing so, you sit coolly in your shop, supplying the means of carrying on the fight, and coining a few wretched coppers out of your schoolfellows' blows and wounds. You have been a bad friend to both of them. Well, some day, perhaps, you may want friends yourself. When you do, I hope you

may find them. Take care that William, the *peaceable unaggressive* Boy, does not contrive (as I fully believe he will contrive) to get a footing on the river, where he can keep a boat, and then one fine morning take your pretty island by surprise.'

"It was Louis' own fault, ma'am," urged John. "He began it all. William was only defending his Fatherland."

"Defending his Grandmotherland!" retorted the Dame contemptuously. "It looks very like self-defence, to chase a Boy half across the playground and threaten to kick down his arbour. Very like self-defence, to train hard for six months, and then propose something which is sure to create a row. And although Louis has been in the wrong, he has also been severely punished, and it is time that he should be relieved. What! are those who make mistakes never to be helped out of them? Is it any the less incumbent on the strong to protect the weak, because the weak has got himself into a mess by his own fault. However, there is some excuse for William, who is half mad with the fever of success; but there is no excuse for you who have sat still in cold blood and looked on. You have abused the trust committed to you as one of the five monitors of the school, and your office shall be taken from you——"

"Please 'em," said a chorus of little Boys together, "please 'em, *do* let him off this time. He was *so* kind to Louis and William when they were bad. He brought them water, and bathed their feces, and stopped the bleeding, and did all sorts of things for them. Please 'em, let him off."

"Well," said the Dame, much affected, "kindness to the wounded shall plead his cause this once, and I will think of some punishment less severe. For I have hopes of Johnnie even yet, that he will rise to a sense of his high position in the school ; and learn that duties cannot be coolly ignored, because they are disagreeable ; that he who shirks the responsibility of doing right, does in very deed and truth do wrong ; that the true test of greatness is the ability to grapple with great difficulties ; that it is but a sorry thing to boast of bravery and skill and power, if, just at the very instant when you are called upon to act, your resources fail you, and you whine out the miserable excuse that 'you don't exactly see how you can interfere.' If, indeed, such an excuse be allowed to stand—if it be really true that the head and champion of the school is thoroughly beaten by circumstances—utterly at a loss, at some critical moment, what is the right thing to do ; let him confess at once that he is unequal to his place

—that he is not the Boy we took him for  
—that his courage has been overrated,  
and his reputation as a hero too cheaply earned;  
that for all his vaunted influence with others he  
is too weak to stay an unrighteous strife—to  
avert a storm of cruel, savage blows—to spare  
the infliction of wounds which will lie gaping  
and unhealed for long years to come, bearing on  
their ghastly face a bitter hatred for the foe that  
dealt them, and contempt for the ‘neutral’ friend  
who looked calmly on.”

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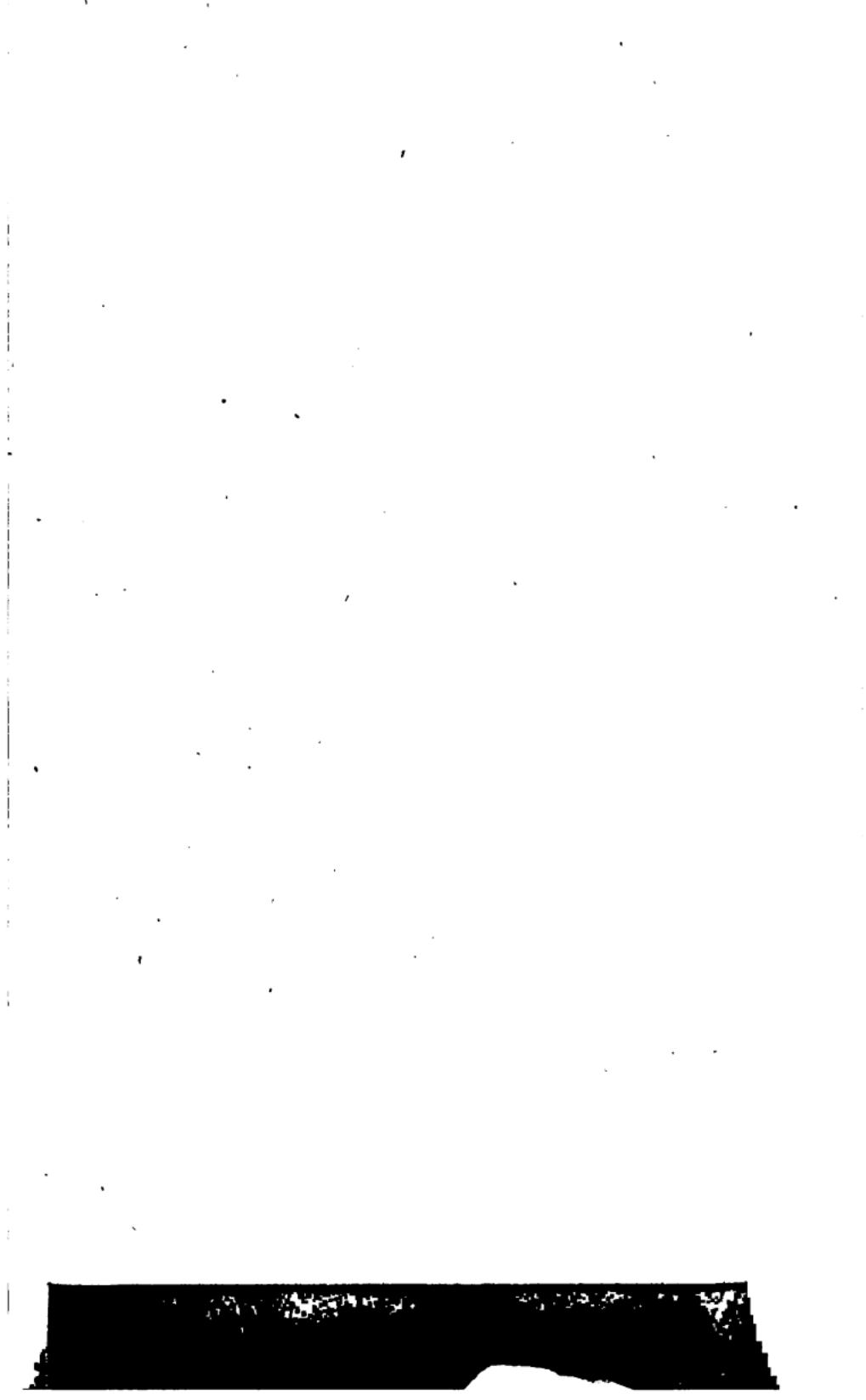
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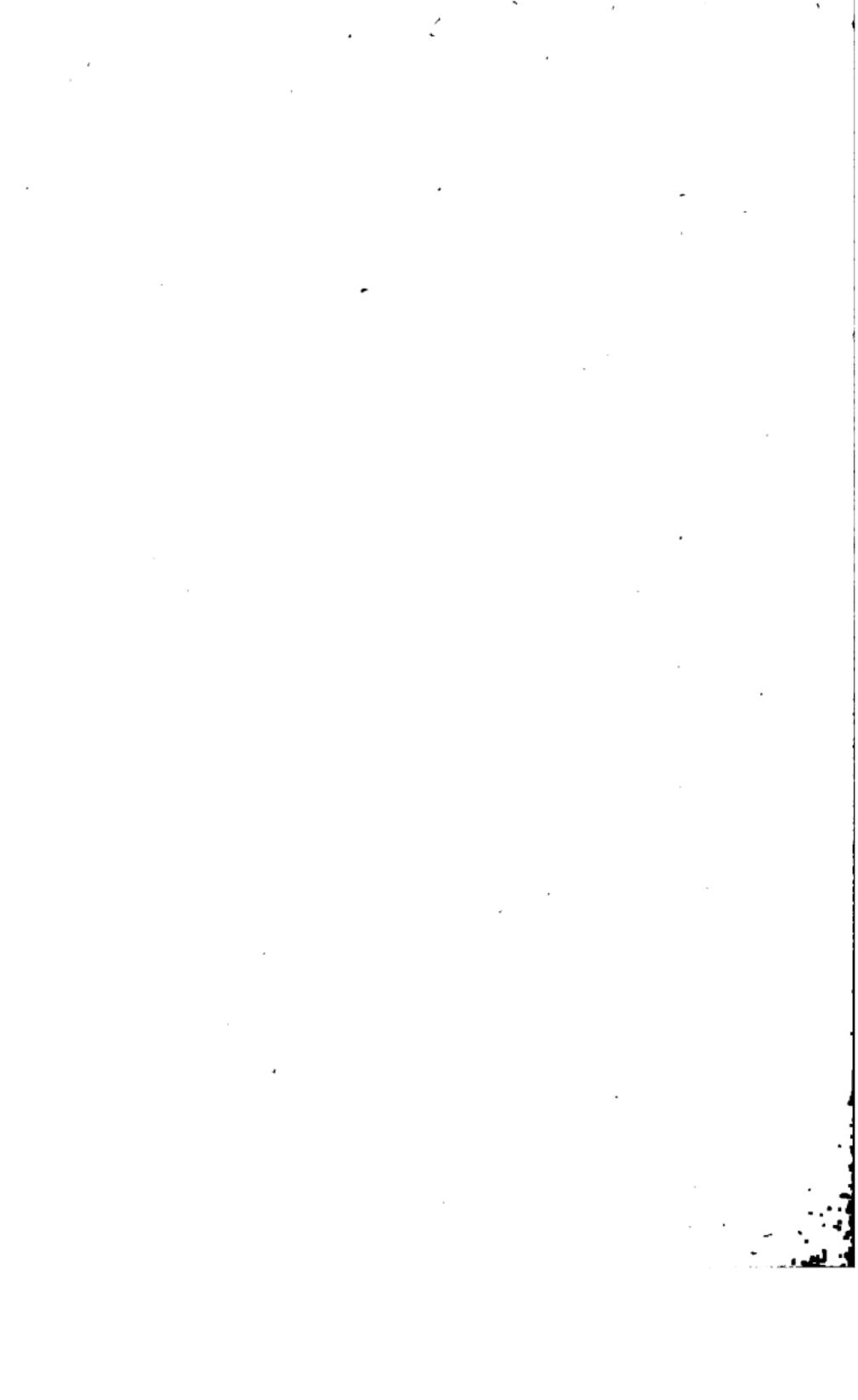
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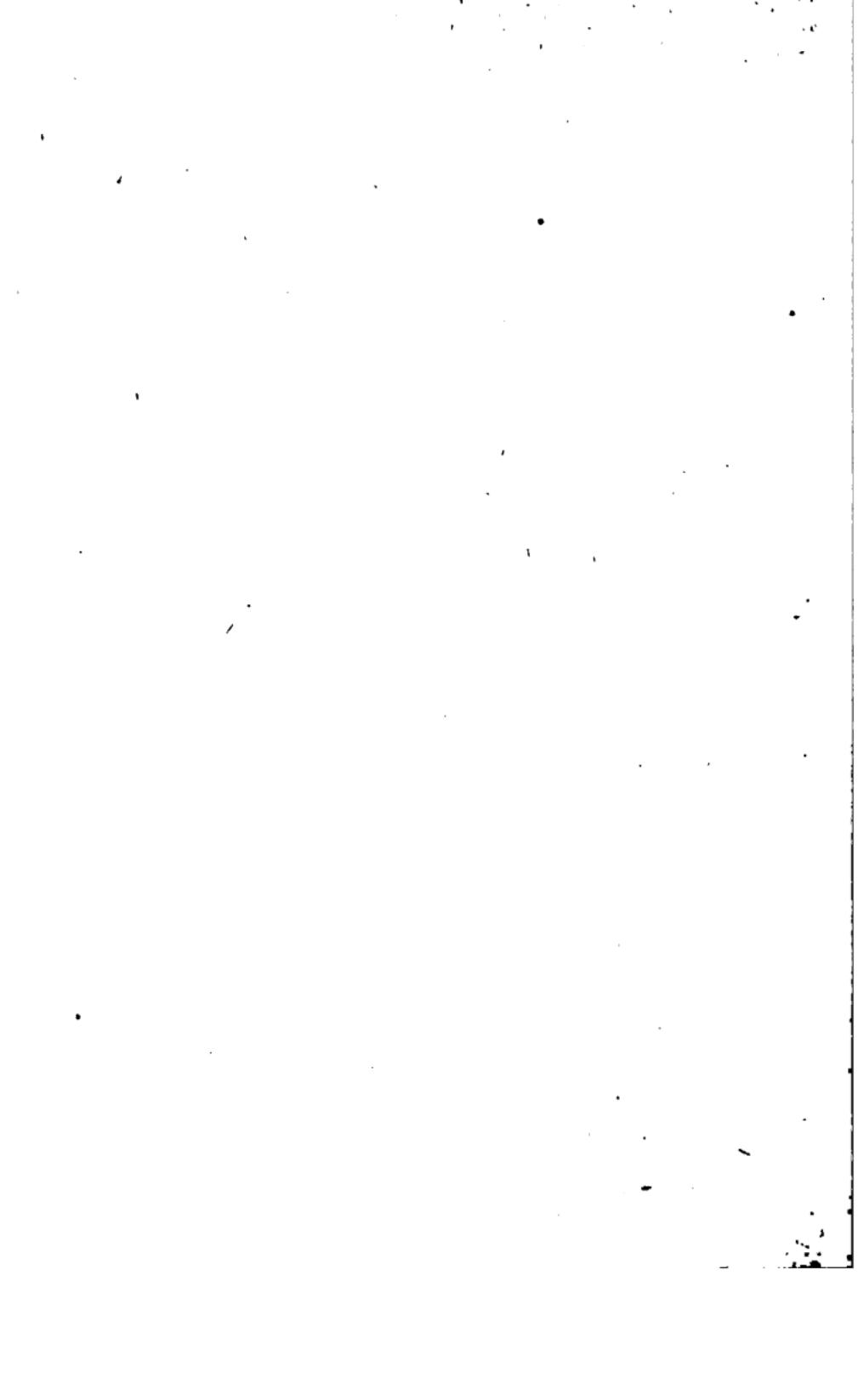






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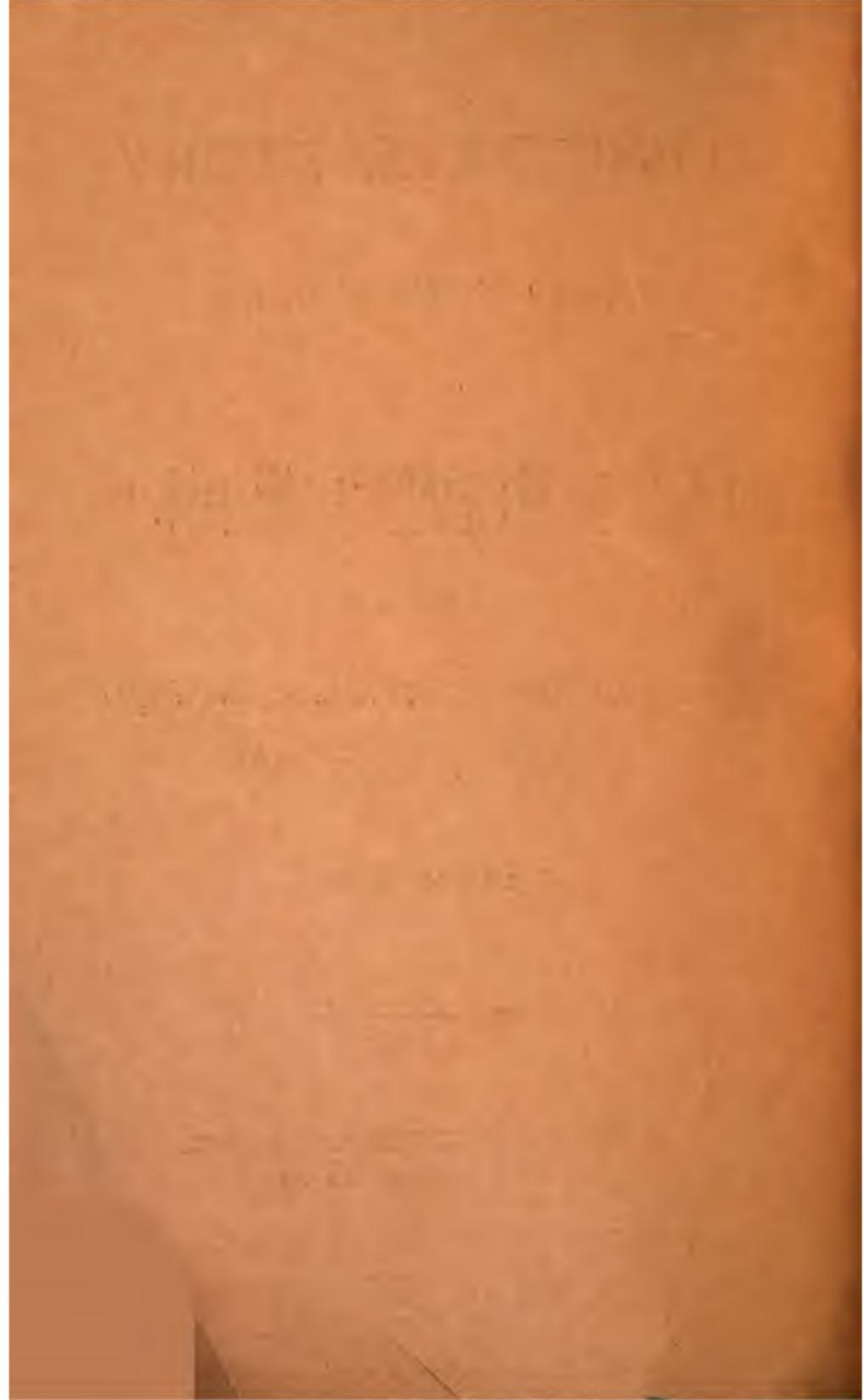
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## THE TRUE STORY ABOUT THE FIGHT.

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### THE HEAD BOYS ALL SOMEWHAT TO BLAME.

A GOOD deal has been said lately about this sad fight in Mrs. Europa's School, which is not altogether true. Perhaps all five principal monitors, Louis, William, Alec, Joseph, and John, whose business it was to meet and settle disputes, see fair play, and prevent bullying, were to blame for the frequent trouble about the gardens which Dame Europa gave her boys, to encourage industry, taste, and commerce. The monitors had larger gardens than any of the others ; but they were all too eager to increase the size of their gardens by adding portions to them from those of the smaller boys, for which they sometimes paid a little money, and which they sometimes obtained by bullying. Johnny had got many

bits added to his garden, which was a good deal scattered about beyond the island. William had only lately increased his garden.

#### LOUIS' DANGEROUS CHARACTER.

But of all the monitors Louis was the most ambitious and vain ; he was always boasting and threatening. This feature of his character belonged to his family, for Nap, a relation of his, had given much trouble when he was in the school ; he actually wanted all the gardens himself, took several, and held them for awhile. He treated William, who was then quite a small boy, very unkindly : took away a considerable part of his garden, and made him pay him some money. At last the whole school rose against him, and Johnny, in particular, put Nap down, and, with Mrs. Europa's consent, turned him out of school. Now it was a bad feature of Louis' character that he was always setting up this bad boy, Nap, as his pattern, praising him, and professing great admiration for him. This style of proceeding caused Johnny apprehension, who did not want to have all the trouble of Nap repeated again ; and none of the monitors really trusted Louis :

they each had a hole in their arbours, through which to watch him, and whenever they went about they kept one eye on him to see what he was up to. This was the case with one small boy especially, who was always in a fright lest Louis should come and seize his pretty garden, which was famous for Brussels sprouts.

Johnny, in particular, did not like Louis' preparations on the water, for they could have no other object he thought than to attack his garden, or at least hinder his trade. He did not, however, show his anxiety, and was always very civil to Louis, which some boys thought was a sign he was afraid; but Johnny was not afraid of anybody, because he did really try to do what was right, and all thought well of his honesty, but he was peaceably inclined, did not like to have a row, and would do anything almost rather than have a fight. All trusted and respected him, and whenever a boy was in trouble, or got persecuted, he came to the island and found refuge and kindness from Johnny in his tool-shop. Even Louis had come over once for safety.

Louis was really the bully of the school, but very hypocritically used to boast about his peacefulness, said peace was his motto, and

stuck it up over his garden; but very shortly after was in two fights, which he got up by himself, and into one of which he dragged Johnny; in the other he fought Joseph, pretending to take the part of a boy named Victor, for whom he stole a bit of Joseph's garden, with an arbour which had Venetian blinds; but he took very good care to make Victor give him a piece of his own garden, in which grew some excellent Savoy cabbages and other Nice vegetables.

## THE PROVOCATION.

It was known to the two boys that Louis was very covetous of a piece of William's garden, along a stream of water which ran through the grounds belonging to the school, and many a time was it in his mind to seize this and fight William for it, but he was afraid of the other monitors, and remembered what had happened to Nap after he had done the same thing.

At length a small boy in the school, who had no garden, a relation of William's, was proposed for one that was vacant near to Louis', who at once objected, not because it mattered much which boy had that garden, but because he

wanted to pick a quarrel with William, who, he felt quite sure, would defend his cousin. William behaved very well in the matter, acted according to the advice of peaceable Johnny, and agreed to advise Leop to give up the garden rather than have any trouble in the school about it. This was certainly yielding a good deal for the sake of peace. It was a proof William did not want to fight, because, if he had wanted to fight Louis, he need only hold to his cousin, who had a perfect right to accept the garden, and all the school would have supported him. Louis, however, was evidently bent on fighting, because, not content with Leop's withdrawal, he haughtily demanded from William the promise that his cousin should never at any future time have that garden. William now saw plainly that Louis wanted to pick a quarrel, and naturally would not consent to anything so unreasonable, for how could he promise all that for another?

## THE FIGHT.

Louis then said he would fight, and William did not shrink from defending himself bravely, for he knew he was in the right, and to be in the right is ever to be strong. Louis, as usual,

was confident and boastful, made a great parade about his fight, as if sure to win, and called the other boys to come and see him punish William.

William, however, stood up manfully, and to the astonishment of the whole school, knocked Louis down several times, and beat him on every occasion when he came against him. At last Louis was completely done, was carried away, and perhaps, as was the case with Nap, may never come back to the school.

William, having fairly won it, now took back the part of Louis' garden which formerly belonged to his own, and also some strong walls for his protection in future.

#### THE RETRIBUTION.

In this we see a just retribution. Louis threatened to take away a part of William's garden, instead of which he lost a portion of his own. Again, Louis' intention had been to fight on William's garden and trample it down, but here again, being in the wrong, he suffered himself, for William forced the fight to be on Louis' garden, which was sadly broken down, many pretty and useful things

spoiled, and the arbour and fountain much defaced.

Now Johnny and the other monitors did not interfere after the fight had begun, and some have thought they were to blame for not doing so; but the fact is, they knew how headstrong, boastful, and ambitious Louis was, and that there would be no use; and then, as the fight went on, there was a secret feeling of satisfaction that Louis had got his deserts, and that the bully of the school was at last checked and subdued, which they thought a good thing for the school in future. Alec could not contain his satisfaction, for several times during the fight he patted William on the back.

Painful though the fight was to witness, it seemed as if justice was being done, and a good lesson given from which all boys might profit. Even Joseph, whom William had lately beaten, could not help feeling this.

MRS. EUROPA'S VIEW, AND LESSONS TAUGHT.

And this is the view that Mrs. Europa took when she came in and had the whole thing explained to her. She was very sorry indeed at the blood which had been shed, and the

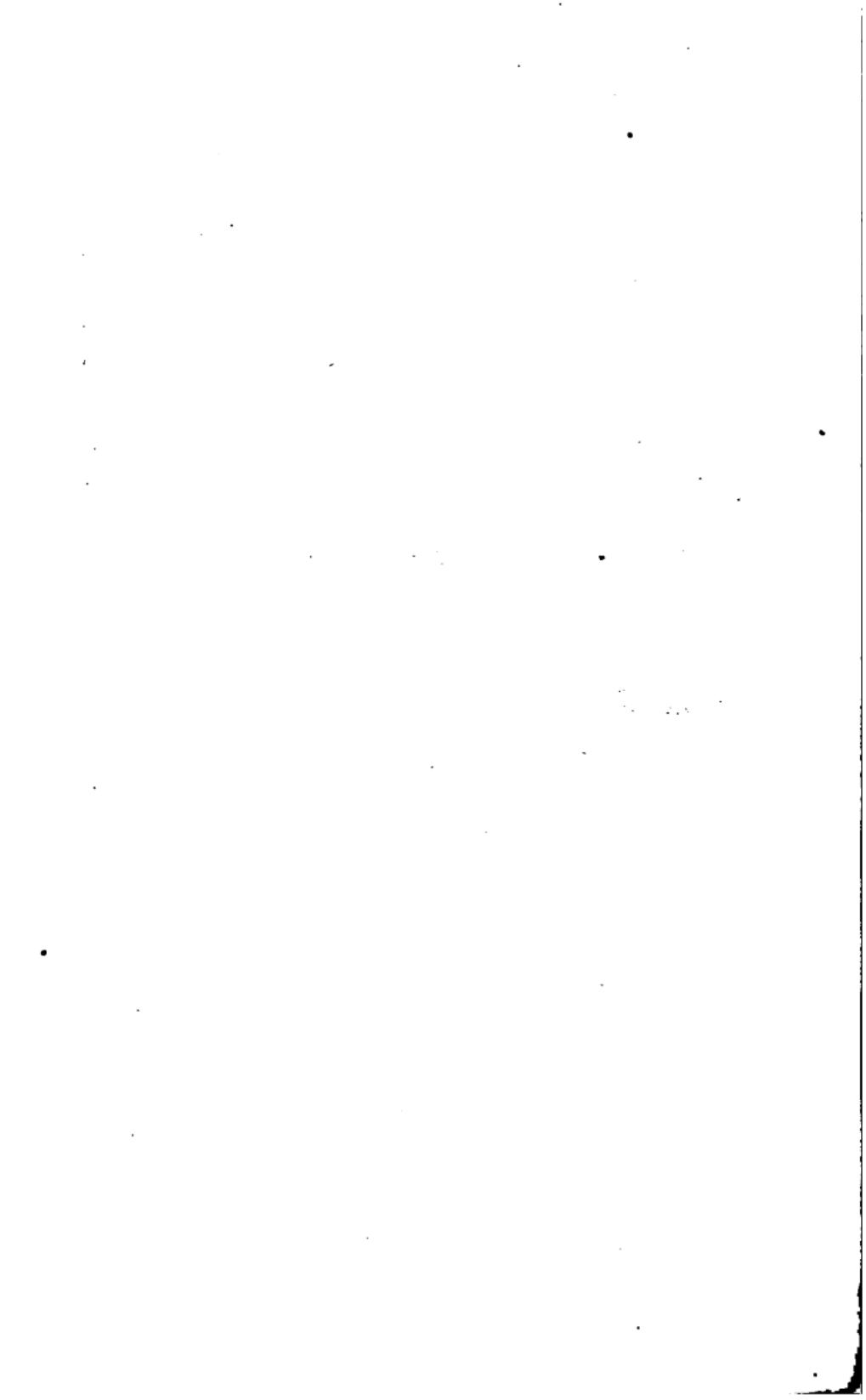
## 10 MRS. EUROPA'S VIEW, AND LESSONS TAUGHT.

sufferings which had been caused by the fight : but under the circumstances she did not blame Johnny nor the other monitors for not interfering. Louis was always a difficult boy for her to manage, and she had to give him his own way very often. She knew how dangerous an example he put before himself in Nap, who had given her no end of trouble before. So though she did not approve of fighting, she could not help being satisfied at the result, which carried a great lesson to all arrogant boys, and would relieve her from some anxiety in the future.

From that time she gave William more honour and a higher place in her confidence, because he had been both peaceful and brave, and put him next to Johnny, with whom he was connected by a marriage in the family, and looked to those two to preserve peace and order in the school. Johnny, too, who was very kind to Louis in his sufferings and trouble, felt relieved that his garden would be safe in future, and the whole school learnt to have more regard and consideration for one another's feelings, not to covet nor desire what did not belong to them, but to be content each to work in his own appointed limits, and to

unite together all unselfishly for the common good.

One happy effect of this dreadful fight was, that all the school, even William, who was successful, looked ever after with horror upon fighting; and a strong hope is entertained by all the best boys in Europa's school that some plan will be adopted for the settlement of quarrels in a way honourable to all parties, which shall prevent the shedding of blood, and the waste and destruction of property and life.





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## The Break-up of Dame Europa's School.

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JOHN went back to his room very glum, after the wigging he had got from Dame Europa. He was not a real sulky boy at all, but he didn't like being chaffed and scolded, and he brooded a good deal over all the words which had been spoken to him. He knew that he was not really afraid of all the other monitors together ; he remembered standing up against them all when he was certain he was right ; and he wasn't a bit afraid of standing up against them all again : and yet he could hardly bear to hear himself called a coward, and did not feel at all easy about it. Neither did he like to be told that he sat coolly down in his shop, and coined beggarly pennies, without caring for the blows which the other boys got. John knew that it wasn't true, and that he was as ready to spend his coppers as to make them ; that he often had

spent them when other boys wanted them, and that even now in this very fight he had spent lots of coppers in helping both Louis and William when they were bad. Still to be called a sloven and a screw, and to have the little boys, who couldn't understand why he didn't get into the fight, laugh and jeer at him, was more than he could very well stand. He knew he was right; he knew that he had no just cause for going in and fighting with William, and he knew it would pretty well break up the whole school if he did, and he kept telling himself so. But still he was a good deal riled at the way they spoke of him and grinned at him, and he began doubling his fist in a suspicious way.

There was a biggish boy, named Ben, to whom at one time he had given himself a good deal up. Ben, who had come originally from a rival establishment of even older date than Dame Europa's, kept by Mrs. Asia, was a deep boy: he was always playing his own game, and he liked to talk big words like an African mystery-man, and took in a great many of the little

boys. Still nobody really trusted Ben : for they saw that he always threw every one over—no matter what promises he had made him—if he thought he could get anything by doing so. Ben was not a favourite when he first came to the school, and he did not take with them as they knew him better ; he had many dark ways ; and the boys didn't like him. However, he had borne it all, and told them the time would come when they should listen to him. And so it did, but not much to Ben's credit. There was another big boy in the school, named Bobby. Bobby had been very great with them all. But he had put out those who used to side with him, by being convinced they ought to give up a way they had, and had fought for together, of keeping their nuts till they grew mouldy and spoilt. Bobby had said so too, and fought for it ; but when he saw how mouldy the old nuts were, and that by changing them freely away before they spoiled they could get in the end ten times as many, he changed his mind, and tried to change theirs too. But they got angry with him, and shouted “Turncoat !” after him. Then cunning

Ben saw his chance, and he went in against Bobby, and though he couldn't stand up against him in fair fight for a moment, yet he had a great knack of calling names; so he called Bobby all sorts of names, and Bobby only gave him a kick now and then, which Ben stomached as was his wont, hoping for future vengeance. But he went on with his names till the angry boys laughed at Bobby; and at last made such a row that John himself for a little while turned his back on Bobby, and then cunning Ben with his hook-nose was taken into John's counsels, and really did advise him.

John soon found him out telling fibs, and sent him about his business. Ben sulked and went off, biding his time for doing more mischief. Now, when this new trouble came on John, Bobby had left the school some time; but a younger boy, whom he had made much of, had taken his place, and now advised John. Ben's great hope was to bring this boy Gladdy into disgrace with John. Gladdy was not a bit afraid of fighting: indeed he had got a name for having a temper of his own; but he saw all the

mischief that would now happen to John if he joined without any just cause in this fray, and so he did all he could to keep John out of it. "You cannot stop it now, do what you will," the wise boy urged. "It is quite true that William ought to have stopped long ago; but Louis began, and won't give in, and William fears that if he stopped now, as soon as ever Louis was well on his legs he would be at him again and perhaps catch him at a disadvantage; and you have no right to meddle." "But I can't bear," growled John, "to be called a coward." "Nobody really thinks you are a coward. They all know that you are as strong and as bold as ever you were; but William and Louis each want to get you to fight for them, and these little boys are all set on by Ben to hoot at you."

Well, for a while, John was kept quiet. But matters seemed to him to get worse and worse; and Ben was always nagging at him through the little boys, and telling him that Gladdy was disgracing him, and that he would lose his place in the school. At last they got his temper really

up, and when his temper was up nothing would hold him; and so he fretted and fumed more and more about it, and the sly Ben kept putting up the little boys to be ever nattering John, until at last he fairly lost his reason, and in a towering passion went up to William and said, "Leave off fighting with Louis, or else fight me, too."

William looked sadly at him, for they were cousins in blood, and had many old relationships with one another, and said, "John, hold off; this is no quarrel of yours. Louis began with me: and even now, if he would only give me security of letting me alone for the future, I would not strike him another blow! but it is not reason, knocked about as I have been, that I should stop, now I have got the better, until I am safe for the future."

John felt that it was all true, and that only made him the more angry, and so in his old strong way he picked Louis up, and, standing between him and William, took all the fighting to himself. Bruised and battered as he was,

William set to in right earnest, and the two cousins began to batter and bruise one another as was never seen before.

No sooner did this fighting begin, than all the school set to at the same evil work. Aleck had long owed a grudge to a great big boy called in the school Turco. Turco looked, indeed, as if he had no business in Dame Europa's school, but belonged to the old school over the way. Still he had been a long time there, and once had been a great fighter, and bullied all the school; but he was terribly out of condition now. His garden, too, was in a bad way, so full of weeds that it seemed hardly to grow anything but poppies. Aleck had always wanted to get this garden for himself, and kept on saying how badly it was kept, and how sick Turco looked, and how much better he would keep it. None of the boys could say anything against this; but none of them wanted Aleck to get it, for his garden was three times as large as any other already, and there was a great deal of it unplanted; and they thought if once he began with Turco's garden he might go

on to theirs: not very long ago, indeed, John and Louis had defended Turco from Aleck, and given him a terrible thrashing for trying to take this garden.

Well, as soon as Aleck saw John fighting with William, and Louis down, he set upon Turco. Turco called out for help, and John from the middle of his own battle shouted to some of the others to help Turco. There was a brave boy, called Victor, younger than any of the monitors, but very ready with his fists, who had helped John and Louis when they thrashed Aleck, and he stood up for poor Turco, and they all three began to fight. Never was such a row heard since Dame Europa had opened her school.

The opposition schools heard of it, and thought their time was come. Mrs. America had a grudge for a long time with some of Dame Europa's pupils, and especially with John; so had Mrs. Asia, too, several of whose boys John had thrashed for bad manners, and still kept in order: so they must have a finger in the pie, and set their boys on to join in the fight.

What might have come of it all, nobody can tell; but a policeman going by heard the uproar, and Dame Europa was brought before the magistrate for keeping a disorderly house. There she stood, poor old lady, wringing her hands and crying, and saying she could not help it, that she hated her boys fighting, that it stopped their learning, and tore their clothes, and wasted her money and theirs, and that she would do anything she could to keep them quiet.

But the magistrate said, "Dame, is it true that you yourself set John on to the fight?"

"Well," she said, "I thought, if he would but go in, he would stop the fight between Louis and William."

"Dame, dame," said he, severely, "you ought to have known John and William better. You ought to have known that when once you had set John to fight he would never stop, and William would never stop, till one had killed the other; and then you would have murder in your house,

and that between cousins. No, dame, your licence for keeping your school must be suspended. I cannot now say for how long, but till you know how to manage the school better."

It was a sad sight to see the old lady's tears as she went hobbling out of court, and saying, "It was the worst day of my life when I set on that English boy to fight in a quarrel with which he had nothing to do."





